

Executive Summary

Background and Study Process

The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared the Fort Hunter Liggett Special Resource Study to evaluate whether the resources of Fort Hunter Liggett are appropriate for inclusion in the national park system. The Fort Hunter Liggett study area includes 164,261 acres. It is located in Monterey County, California, in the San Antonio Valley and on the east side of the Santa Lucia Mountains. This study report was prepared with the recognition that Fort Hunter Liggett is an active Army Reserve training installation.

Congress authorized a study of Fort Hunter Liggett in November 1999, partly in response to the 1995 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission's (BRAC) recommendation that certain structures within the Fort Hunter Liggett cantonment area were excess to the Army's needs. The inventory of BRAC excess properties available to the NPS was analyzed in the *Draft*



The Milpitas Hacienda, Richard Crusius photo

Fort Hunter Liggett Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment released in June 2004. This property included the Julia Morgan-designed Milpitas Hacienda and adjacent swimming pool, tennis court and outbuildings; five ranch bungalows; the Gil Adobe; and one acre of land under and adjacent to the Tidball Store. In addition, the Javelin Court area, including 41 housing units in twelve buildings, was also considered.

The *Draft Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment* addressed the resources of the entire installation. However, the management alternatives considered and the Environmental Assessment focused only on the BRAC excess property as the remainder of the installation, an active Army Reserve training installation, could not feasibly become a national park system unit while in active use by the Army.

On May 27, 2005, the National Park Service received a letter from the Department of the Army stating that the BRAC property at Fort Hunter Liggett considered in the draft study report is no longer excess to the Army and is needed in order to support the Army mission. Therefore, the property formerly referred to as the BRAC excess property is no longer available for consideration of management by the National Park Service or transfer to another agency. The Army will continue to own and manage these properties. As a result, the management alternatives considered in the draft study report which proposed the transfer of properties to other agencies are no longer under consideration.

This final study report contains the resource analysis completed according to the NPS special resource study process. It also presents resource protection measures that emerged during the study process that the Army could pursue to support and enhance protection of nationally significant cultural and natural resources at Fort Hunter Liggett.

Study Process and Findings

In a special resource study, a proposed addition to the national park system will receive a favorable recommendation from the NPS only if it meets all of the following four criteria:

- (1) it possesses nationally significant natural or cultural resources;
- (2) it is a suitable addition to the system;
- (3) it is a feasible addition to the system; and
- (4) it requires direct NPS management, instead of alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector.

In cases where a study area's resources meet criteria for national significance but do not meet other criteria for inclusion in the national park system, the National Park Service may recommend an alternative status, such as an "affiliated area" designation.

Significance

The National Park Service has adopted four basic criteria to evaluate national significance. A resource is considered nationally significant if it:

- (1) is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource;
- (2) possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage;
- (3) offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment, or for scientific study; and,
- (4) retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

The NPS has determined through this study process that Fort Hunter Liggett contains the following nationally significant natural and cultural resources:

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- The Milpitas Hacienda is nationally significant for its association with architect Julia Morgan and media magnate William Randolph Hearst. As the northernmost component of a 250,000-acre country estate that Hearst amassed in the 1920s and 1930s, the Hacienda provides an opportunity to expand and enhance the story of Hearst and his collaboration with Morgan. As such, the Milpitas Hacienda appears to be an excellent addition to the Hearst San Simeon Estate National Historic Landmark, also known as Hearst Castle® or La Cuesta Encantada.
- The national significance of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail was established through its Congressional designation in 1990. The oak savanna landscape of Fort Hunter Liggett provides one of the few remaining historically evocative settings of the trail. The Mission San Antonio de Padua, an inholding within Fort Hunter Liggett, was an Anza expedition campsite. The land, oak trees, and rivers of Fort Hunter Liggett were noted in the expedition's diary entries during their stay at the Mission.
- Over 600 archeological sites related to Native Americans have been recorded at Fort Hunter Liggett. These sites comprise one of the most extensive complexes of Native American sites between the San Francisco Bay Area and the Santa Barbara Channel. Further scientific study is necessary to determine the significance and eligibility of Fort Hunter Liggett's prehistoric resources.

NATURAL RESOURCES

- The number of rare and sensitive plant species on Fort Hunter Liggett is among the highest for similar sized areas in California. This diversity of species can be attributed to the well preserved landscape and unique geologic resources that underlie Fort Hunter Liggett.
- Fort Hunter Liggett encompasses extensive oak woodland and savanna communities, including valley oak, blue oak, coast live oak and native

grassland understory vegetation. It offers the widest diversity of oak taxa of any area of its size in California. Oak woodlands and savanna on Fort Hunter Liggett include the largest known contiguous valley bottom stands of valley oak. The native oak savanna provides important habitat for many rare, threatened, and endangered species, including purple amole, tule elk and San Joaquin kit fox. Fort Hunter Liggett has the highest concentration of oak savanna- specializing birds of any location in the nation.

- Chaparral, vernal pools and riparian areas are additional rare habitat types on Fort Hunter Liggett that support nationally significant species. Chaparral communities harbor rare and sensitive plant populations typically found only in other regions of California, as well as unique endemic species associated with serpentine soils. A large ultramafic body with serpentine substrate at Burro Mountain contains a particularly high concentration of rare and unique plant species. Riparian areas and vernal pools support rare and sensitive species such as the arroyo toad, bald eagle, Santa Lucia mint, and vernal pool fairy shrimp.

STATE AND LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE

- The Gil Adobe and Tidball Store are locally significant historic structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Oaks along Nacimiento-Fergusson Road, NPS photo

Suitability

An area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that (1) is not already adequately represented in the national park system; or (2) is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land managing entity, including other federal agencies; Tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

The NPS has determined, based on resource quality, character, rarity and representation of cultural and natural history themes, that if the Fort Hunter Liggett study area were to become excess to the Army's needs, it would be suitable for inclusion in the national park system.

The Milpitas Hacienda represents the themes “expressing cultural values” and “developing the American economy” for its connection to William Randolph Hearst’s historic estate and media empire. Hearst’s estate, including La Cuesta Encantada (Hearst Castle®), stands out among American country houses and would provide the best example of this type of estate on the west coast. Inclusion of the Milpitas Hacienda in the national park system would provide an excellent opportunity to interpret the lives and work of William Randolph Hearst and Julia Morgan and could expand visitor experience and interpretation at Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument.

The Fort Hunter Liggett study area represents the theme “peopling places” and the topic “encounters, conflicts, and colonization” through resources that represent Spanish settlement and encounters with the native Salinan people. The relatively unchanged landscape provides the historic context for the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, the Mission San Antonio de Padua, and associated archeological sites.

The landscape at Fort Hunter Liggett provides representation of the natural history themes “dry coniferous forest and dry woodland,” “chaparral,” “riparian woodland” and “vernal pools.” Fort Hunter Liggett contains over 72,000 acres of oak woodlands and savanna. There is no equivalent



Rolling hills with the Santa Lucia Mountains in the distance, NPS photo

size area of California oak habitat protected, whether by federal, state, local or private managers, anywhere in the United States. The protected oak habitat at Fort Hunter Liggett is suitable for inclusion in the national park system; however it is not available to the NPS.

Intact riparian areas along the San Antonio and Nacimiento rivers, vernal pools and communities associated with serpentine substrates provide important habitat for Federally-listed and endemic species. The combination of rare plant communities on Fort Hunter Liggett is suitable for inclusion in the National Park System. However, the natural areas of Fort Hunter Liggett are not available to the NPS at this time because they are in use as an Army Reserve training facility and expected to be retained by the Army indefinitely.

Feasibility

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area must:

- (1) be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries); and
- (2) be capable of efficient administration by the NPS at a reasonable cost.

In evaluating feasibility, the National Park Service considers a variety of factors including boundary size and configuration, land use, ownership patterns, planning and zoning, access and public enjoyment potential, existing resource degradation and threats to the resources, public interest and support, social and economic impact, and costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration and operation.

The NPS has determined that it is not currently feasible to manage any part of Fort Hunter Liggett, including the Milpitas Hacienda and related historic structures, as a unit of the national park system because none of the land is currently excess to the Army's needs or available for management by the National Park Service. NPS feasibility criteria were used to analyze and document the feasibility of two possible long-term scenarios:

- A historic site centered around the Milpitas Hacienda.
- A larger park incorporating additional lands of Fort Hunter Liggett.

Based on this analysis, Hacienda Hill and Fort Hunter Liggett as a whole, if available for transfer to another agency or organization, would protect the primary resources, provide a suitable setting for these resources, and provide sufficient land for appropriate use and development. Management of the area as a park or historic site would be compatible with local zoning and surrounding land uses. The natural and cultural resources have a strong potential for public enjoyment, based on their quality and integrity. After remediation for unexploded ordnance and other environmental contaminants, the area could provide sufficient access and public use potential.

However, Fort Hunter Liggett remains an active Army Reserve training facility, and none of the installation is currently excess to the Army's needs or available for transfer to the NPS or other agencies. Therefore it is not currently feasible to manage any part of Fort Hunter Liggett as a unit of the national park system.

Management Options and Opportunities

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 and no management alternatives are being put forth by the NPS.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN THE DRAFT FORT HUNTER LIGGETT SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

In the Draft Fort Hunter Liggett Special Resource Study report, the NPS considered a no-action alternative, plus an alternative that recommended legislation to authorize the 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.

The Gil Adobe and land at Tidball Store were recommended for transfer to local or state agencies in cooperation with a local nonprofit organization.

Transfer to other agencies, as envisioned in Alternative B is not feasible because there is no longer any property available for transfer.

Because the areas that were the subject of these alternatives are no longer considered excess to the Army's needs, these alternatives are no longer viable.

OTHER MANAGEMENT OPTIONS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED

Unless direct NPS management of a studied area is identified as the superior alternative, the National Park Service will recommend that one or more other entities assume a lead management role, and that the area not receive national park system status. The National Park Service

developed and considered a number of options involving NPS management, before determining that such options were not feasible.

POTENTIAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ARMY

The NPS encourages the Army to continue its protection and management of the natural and cultural resources in a manner that retains their national significance. Ideas that emerged during the study process include ways that the Army could supplement their efforts to care for the nationally significant natural and cultural resources of Fort Hunter Liggett, and to ensure that they maintain their condition and integrity. These ideas include opportunities for cultural resource management, natural resource management and opportunities for public enjoyment.



The Milpitas Hacienda, NPS photo

Cultural resource management opportunities include:

- Improvements to the Milpitas Hacienda which could be financed through an increase in room rates at the Hacienda
- Further management of the landscape surrounding the Milpitas Hacienda to preserve its cultural landscape.
- Developing partnerships with interested agencies and organizations such as:
 - California State Parks to assist in management of the Milpitas Hacienda given its historic connection to Hearst Castle.[®]
 - Local Salinan organizations to care for sacred sites, provide public education and raise awareness of the importance of protecting these sites.
 - Monterey County and local organizations: to restore and manage the locally significant historic sites related to the town of Jolon. This partnership could nonprofits and Salinan organizations.
 - National Park Service to evaluate the potential addition of the Milpitas Hacienda to the Hearst San Simeon Estate National Historic Landmark (Hearst Castle[®]).

Natural resource management opportunities include:

- Coordination with universities and non-profit organizations to inventory resources and to conduct scientific research such as botanical surveys.
- Request the NPS to evaluate the oak woodlands and savanna and the Burro Mountain area for potential designation as National Natural Landmarks. Designation would provide additional recognition and make the area eligible for NPS technical assistance.
- Collaboration between the Army and Los Padres National Forest to jointly manage

significant oak woodland savanna on Fort Hunter Liggett and at the adjacent Wagon Caves area in the national forest. Together, these areas represent some of the best remaining, relatively pristine valley oak habitat.

Public enjoyment opportunities include:

- The Army could explore additional visitor opportunities in areas that are publicly accessible and areas that are not used for training activities, while taking into account safety and security concerns.
- Collaboration with the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, Mission San Antonio de Padua and local nonprofit groups to mark and interpret important sites along the trail.
- Collaboration with California State Parks to enhance visitor opportunities at the Milpitas Hacienda.



Nacimiento River, NPS photo

POSSIBLE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES, IF LAND BECOMES AVAILABLE FOR TRANSFER

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.

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.

Further analysis will be necessary if the property becomes available in order to determine feasibility, the interests and capabilities of various potential management organizations, and appropriate roles.

Transmittal to Congress

The study legislation (P.L. 106-113 & H.R. 3194 Conference Report, 113 Stat. 1535, 1537) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to submit the final report to Congress. Because the BRAC excess properties at Fort Hunter Liggett that were recommended for transfer to California State Parks in the draft study report are no longer available, there is no new federal action envisioned or recommended and no action is required by Congress.



Tule elk; Brenda Tharp photo

Milpitas Ranch, 1929; Julia Morgan Collection, Special Collections, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

*photo available in printed report