

LS Feasibility



Above: San Antonio River, Brenda Tharp; Below: The Milpitas Hacienda, NPS photo

Feasibility

Introduction

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 National Park Service at a reasonable cost (NPS *Management Policies*, 2001, Section 1.3.3).

In evaluating feasibility, the NPS considers a variety of factors, such as:

- Size and boundary configurations;
- Land ownership patterns; current and potential uses of the study area and surrounding lands; local planning and zoning for the study area;
- Access and public enjoyment potential;
- Costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration, and operation;
- Current and potential threats to the resources; existing degradation of resources;
- Level of local and general public support; and
- Economic/socioeconomic impacts of designation as a unit of the national park system.

An overall evaluation of feasibility is made after taking into account all of the above factors. However, evaluations may sometimes identify concerns or conditions, rather than simply reach a “yes” or “no” conclusion. For example, some new areas may be feasible additions to the national park system only if landowners are willing to sell; or the boundary encompasses specific areas necessary for visitor access; or state or local governments will provide appropriate assurances that adjacent land uses will remain compatible with the study area’s resources and values. (NPS *Management Policies*, 2001, Section 1.3.3).

The draft study report evaluated the feasibility of NPS management of a) property that was excess to the Army and made available to the NPS through the BRAC process, and b) Fort Hunter Liggett as a whole. Because the Fort Hunter Liggett excess property has been removed from the BRAC list and is no longer excess to the Army, this final study report does not make a distinction between excess property and other parts of Fort Hunter Liggett.

The feasibility analysis recognizes that Fort Hunter Liggett remains an active Army Reserve training facility, and none of the installation is currently 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.

This section uses the NPS feasibility criteria to analyze and document the feasibility of two possible long-term scenarios: a) a historic site centered around the Milpitas Hacienda, and b) Fort Hunter Liggett as a park.

The following factors were considered:

Boundary Size and Configuration

An acceptable boundary for an envisioned unit of the national park system should provide for the inclusion and protection of the primary resource; sufficient surrounding area to provide a proper setting for the resource or to interrelate a group of resources; and sufficient land for appropriate use and development.

HISTORIC SITE

The Milpitas Hacienda and related buildings are situated on a 21-acre site known as “Hacienda Hill.” The Milpitas Hacienda is the only nationally significant resource in this area. Other historic structures such as the tin barn (fire station) and ranch bungalows have been found to be ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (Eidsness and Jackson, 1994). The Hacienda Hill area, if made available for management as a historic site, would include and protect the primary resource of significance.

The setting of the Milpitas Hacienda has been compromised by the development of the cantonment area to the north and east, including addition of new buildings, paved roads and parking lots. However, views of the Milpitas Hacienda in several locations are comparable to views of the Milpitas Hacienda in the 1930s when Hearst used it. Further description of the setting and the cultural landscape of the Milpitas Hacienda can be found in the “Significance” chapter of this report. The area that provides the landscape setting for the Milpitas Hacienda is managed by the Army and is expected to retain its current appearance for the foreseeable future. Mission San Antonio de Padua is within view of the Milpitas Hacienda, to the northwest. The Army considers views from the Mission to be sensitive, and restricts training exercises and vehicle movement near the Mission (Army Corps of Engineers 2000). Protection of the Mission viewshed would contribute substantially to the protection of the setting of the Milpitas Hacienda.

The Hacienda Hill area, if made available for management as a historic site, appears to provide sufficient land for appropriate use and development. Several of the nearby ranch bungalows and the tin barn are part of the historic setting of the Milpitas Hacienda, and could be appropriate for park administration, visitor services or staff housing use. At the Jolon townsite, the Gil Adobe and land under and adjacent to the Tidball Store are locally significant and would be suitable for local and non-profit management and/or ownership.

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT

The 164,261 acre study area, encompassing all of Fort Hunter Liggett, contains exceptional natural resources, biological communities of a relatively undisturbed and expansive nature, historic resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places, at least 600 archeological sites, and a cultural landscape illustrating the broad sweep of California history.

Fort Hunter Liggett as a whole, if made available for management as a park, would be sufficient to protect these resources and provide a suitable setting for them, and would provide sufficient land for appropriate use and development. If a smaller area were made available for park management, the boundary would need to be evaluated to determine whether it would include and protect these nationally significant resources, provide a suitable setting for them, and provide sufficient land for appropriate use and development.

Land Use, Ownership Patterns, Planning and Zoning

Fort Hunter Liggett is currently under federal ownership, managed as part of the Western Training Center for the US Army Reserve. Military bases are included in the Public/Quasi - Public land use category in the Monterey County General Plan (Monterey County, 1995 and 2004). As federal land, Fort Hunter Liggett is not subject to local zoning. Jolon Road, which the Tidball Store land abuts, is proposed in the January 2004 draft Monterey County General Plan to be designated as a Winery Corridor. This designation would likely be compatible with visitor-serving uses or cultural resource conservation activities at this site. The Milpitas Hacienda is currently managed by a concessioner and provides visitor lodging and food service. These uses would likely be compatible with a historic site or park.

All lands and facilities at Fort Hunter Liggett have been determined by the Army to be necessary to support the training mission, and are expected to be retained by Fort Hunter Liggett for the indefinite future. These lands are therefore not available for transfer to the NPS or any other organization at this time, and NPS management is not currently feasible. However, recent legislation gives the Department of Agriculture (U.S. Forest Service) the right of first refusal on any properties that are determined to be excess to the Army’s needs at any time in the future. Thus management for public use and recreation could occur in the future, if the land is not needed for military use.

Other park agencies or organizations could also be involved in management of the area in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. Collaboration with California State Parks could further enhance the potential for public use and enjoyment.

Local government and private inholdings within Fort Hunter Liggett include the Mission San Antonio de Padua, Saint Luke's Episcopal Church and cemetery, and the Tidball Store structure. These lands are not the subject of this study. However, current uses would be compatible with park management.

Access and Public Enjoyment Potential

Fort Hunter Liggett is located in southern Monterey County, approximately 20 miles from Highway 101 and 25 miles from the coastal Highway 1. It is within half a day's drive for over 10 million people in northern and central California.

While no comprehensive visitation numbers exist, discussions with managers of the Mission and the Milpitas Hacienda indicate that at least 22,000 people have visited these sites annually, including military and civilian staff and their guests, military trainees, visitors and parishioners of the Mission San Antonio de Padua, and diners and overnight guests at the Milpitas Hacienda. In addition, approximately 6000 anglers and hunters are estimated to visit Fort Hunter Liggett, for a minimum of 28,000 annual visitors. Visitation numbers presumably declined in 2001 and 2002, based on restricted access after September 11, 2001.

HISTORIC SITE

The Milpitas Hacienda has strong potential for continued and increased public enjoyment. It is the only extant structure directly associated with William Randolph Hearst and Julia Morgan, outside the Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, that could be made available for public use; other structures are privately owned. Operated as a restaurant and hotel, the Milpitas Hacienda provides the only possibility for

experiential interpretation of the architecture created by the Morgan/Hearst collaboration. There are opportunities for a range of activities, including touring the historic structure, eating in the dining room, staying overnight, and interpretive programs and materials regarding the Hearst years, architect Julia Morgan, early California settlement, and military history.

Access to the Milpitas Hacienda is dependent upon access through other portions of Fort Hunter Liggett. Fort Hunter Liggett policies have generally allowed public access to the cantonment area, Mission San Antonio de Padua and other inholdings, and on through roads. However, during periods of heightened security concern, access to the installation has sometimes been restricted. While occasional closures for safety or security purposes can be expected, regular and relatively open access to the Milpitas Hacienda is the norm and would be necessary for this area to function as a historic site. Prolonged closure could impact visitor experiences and jeopardize park budgets, concessioner contracts and economic viability, and other funding sources for resource protection.

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) can be found in other portions of Fort Hunter Liggett, but is not known to exist in the cantonment area or paved and unpaved roads used to reach this area.

The Milpitas Hacienda area provides sufficient potential for public enjoyment. Sufficient public access can be provided to this area, except during the relatively rare times when security or safety issues limit public access.

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT

In the long term, the natural and cultural resources of Fort Hunter Liggett have strong potential for public enjoyment, based on their quality and integrity. The oak woodland and savanna ecosystems and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail are of particular interest. Fort Hunter Liggett currently draws a steady stream of visitors who drive through to



The Gil Adobe with protective tarps, NPS photo

enjoy the scenery, or who visit the Milpitas Hacienda or Mission in part because of the installation's pastoral setting. Public access is limited to Jolon, Mission Creek, Nacimiento - Fergusson, Infantry and Del Venturi roads. These roads provide access to the cantonment area and the various inholdings, and offering a route through the Santa Lucia Mountains to the Pacific Coast. Certain roads are closed to the public under high security alert conditions or when training activities require temporary closure.

Fort Hunter Liggett currently provides recreational access to the general public under the direction of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a), which provides for "(A) the conservation and rehabilitation of natural resources on military installations; (B) the sustainable multi-purpose use of the resources, which shall include hunting, fishing, trapping, and nonconsumptive uses; and (C) subject to safety requirements and military security, public access to military installations to facilitate the use." Fort Hunter Liggett's public access program currently focuses on hunting and fishing opportunities. Hunters and anglers are allowed access to the installation through day - use permits, as provided for by the Sikes Act, as described above. Access is permitted only when it does not conflict with training needs and safety requirements. An extensive network of unpaved roads and trails exists and is currently used for hunting/fishing access.



Palisades area, NPS photo

If portions of Fort Hunter Liggett are made available for park management and public use, access and public enjoyment opportunities could be greatly expanded. There is an extensive road network which could be converted to trails, providing access to the oak woodlands and savannas, geologic features such as the Palisades, streams and riparian areas, and scenic viewpoints. Interpretive themes could include the oak savanna, oak woodland and riparian ecosystems, Salinan culture and the 6000-year Native American presence in the area, European and Mexican exploration and settlement, the Hearst Ranch years, architect Julia Morgan, and military training use of the area. There would also be widespread educational and scientific study opportunities.

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) is known to exist in some of the undeveloped areas of Fort Hunter Liggett, limiting the potential for public access to these areas in the near term. Ordnance has been used throughout Fort Hunter Liggett since its establishment as a military reservation during World War II. Since the 1970s training units have been required to police the area for UXO upon the completion of their training. Despite the policy, ordnance has been found in virtually every training area (US Army Corps of Engineers 1999). While impact areas such as the Gabilan and Stony Valleys have a higher concentration of UXO than areas with less use, few areas outside the

cantonment area have been fully tested or cleared of UXO. Remediation for unexploded ordnance and other environmental contaminants would be required before land could be transferred to other agencies. If this remediation were completed, the area would provide sufficient access and public enjoyment potential. Public access to remediated areas could be allowed while other areas remain un-remediated and closed to public access.

Existing Resource Degradation and Threats

Fort Hunter Liggett contains natural and cultural resources of high quality and integrity. The installation has a resource management staff dedicated to protecting these resources, but military activities may pose threats to the resources.

HISTORIC SITE

The Milpitas Hacienda structure is in good to excellent condition with the exception of water damage that has stained and loosened plaster at areas near the open corner towers. There are no immediate threats to this building.

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT

Military training on Fort Hunter Liggett that may affect significant natural resources includes activities such as live-fire exercises, field maneuvers, fixed-range firing, aviation, or weapons testing (Clark 2000). Military operations and wildfires have increased soil erosion. Wheeled and tracked traffic has also impacted archeological sites: 81% of surveyed sites showed evidence of such disturbance (Eidsness and Jackson 1994b). There are also reports of unauthorized access to Salinan sacred sites, resulting in damage, destruction or removal.

Fires at Fort Hunter Liggett are caused by natural occurrence, training or other human activity, and controlled burns. Fort Hunter Liggett has adopted a plan for controlled burns in order to reduce the fuel load in areas used for live fire exercises, for chaparral management, to reduce star-thistle, break up even-aged stands of

chaparral to improve wildlife habitat, reduce cattail stands at reservoirs, and to protect against fires escaping off-post onto private land. Military training occurring during the hot, dry summer has the greatest potential to ignite wildfires.

The oak woodlands and savannas of Fort Hunter Liggett may be threatened by Sudden Oak Death (*Phytophthora ramorum*), which has been found in Monterey County.

Public Interest and Support

Public interest in the Fort Hunter Liggett Special Resource Study process has been moderate. There has been support for NPS involvement in the area, as well as concern about possible NPS restrictions on the mission of Fort Hunter Liggett and concerns about the impacts of increased visitation to the area. There appears to be widespread appreciation of the value of the natural and cultural resources on Fort Hunter Liggett, recognition of Fort Hunter Liggett's protection of those resources to date, and desire for continued public access to the Milpitas Hacienda. A summary of public comments received during the scoping period can be found in Appendix G. Public comments received on the draft study report can be found in Appendix H.

Major stakeholders in the future of Fort Hunter Liggett include: Fort Hunter Liggett staff and residents; military units using Fort Hunter Liggett for training (particularly nearby Camp Roberts); Salinan groups, whose ancestors once inhabited this area; the adjacent Los Padres National Forest; California State Parks, which manages Hearst Castle® (Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument); the Monterey Diocese of the Catholic Church, which owns the Mission San Antonio de Padua and surrounding lands; Monterey County Parks Department, which owns the Dutton Hotel and the Tidball Store structure; and the Milpitas Hacienda concessioner. Other interest groups include the California Native Plant Society, the Friends of Historic San Antonio Mission, the San Antonio Valley Historical Association, the Ventana Wilderness Alliance, the

Ventana Conservation and Land Trust, the Big Sur Sanctuary Coalition, the Pelican Network, and hunting interests.

Social and Economic Impact

HISTORIC SITE

A historic site at Fort Hunter Liggett could be expected to increase the number of recreational visitors by approximately 10,000 visitor days per year in the short term. Based on analysis of visitation at nearby parks, longer term annual visitation could be substantially higher, from 50,000-75,000, depending on how the area is managed and marketed. These visitors would contribute to the local economy by purchasing various goods and services, including food, gasoline, and lodging. However, these visitation numbers are still small, relative to regional visitation in the Monterey Bay area, Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, and Big Sur.

Socioeconomic impacts of historic site designation could be expected to be beneficial and minor to moderate, and would likely support the feasibility of historic site designation.

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT

A park involving the broader Fort Hunter Liggett installation could have substantial socioeconomic impacts, primarily from increased visitation and public and private investments in visitor services. Impacts would depend on the scale of the park and the level of continuing military use.

Costs Associated with Acquisition, Development, Restoration and Operation

HISTORIC SITE

Acquisition and Development: It is assumed that direct costs for acquisition of the Milpitas Hacienda and related historic areas would be waived and the property transferred as a “No Cost Transfer” to the receiving agency. However, all indirect costs would be paid by the receiving agency. Costs for site surveys, initial research and



Hacienda restaurant, NPS photo

planning, renovation and development of visitor facilities would be moderate.

Park Operations, Maintenance, Restoration and Capital Costs: The NPS has estimated park operations costs at approximately \$400,000–600,000 annually, assuming a concessioner offers lodging and food services in the Milpitas Hacienda and funds the structure’s routine maintenance and certain operational aspects. Annual operating budgets for several comparable National Historic Sites are presented in Table 10: National Historic Site Annual Operating Budgets, for comparison.

Major capital investment in the Milpitas Hacienda would at some point be necessary. A study of the hospitality potential at the Milpitas Hacienda suggests that necessary capital investment and cyclic maintenance for the Milpitas Hacienda can feasibly be financed by a concessioner (Bay Area Economics, 2001). “As is” renovation of the Milpitas Hacienda could cost \$300,000 and would include new finishes in rooms, upgrades to fixtures and furnishings, and

upgrading of mechanical systems. This renovation cost would be incurred by the concessioner and could be financed through increased room rates. Full rehabilitation of the Milpitas Hacienda to a high quality, full-service hospitality operation could cost \$3–6 million (Bay Area Economics, 2001). Renovation of Building 124 for administrative offices and/or visitor center could cost \$400,000. Full renovation of the other ranch bungalows could cost \$1 million (NPS - PWRO Facility Management Program).

Gil Adobe and Tidball Store: The costs of management of the Gil Adobe and land under and adjacent to the Tidball Store were not assessed, because these areas are not nationally significant and not suitable for management in a national park unit. However, these areas are locally significant and would be suitable for local and non-profit management and/or ownership. These areas could be managed by Monterey County Parks Department, California State Parks or a non-profit. Costs for basic stabilization to maintain current conditions would likely be minimal. Costs for full rehabilitation of the Gil Adobe could be substantial.

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT

The costs of establishing a park in the broader Fort Hunter Liggett installation have not been determined. If any such transfer were to occur, land acquisition costs would presumably be minimal. The managing organization would likely accept transfer of such property only after appropriate cleanup of unexploded ordnance and other hazardous materials. Park development and operations costs could be substantial. Table 11: National Park Unit Annual Operating Budgets provides park operating budgets for a selection of existing national park units. Based on these costs, management of a larger park at Fort Hunter Liggett could be estimated at \$1-5 million annually. Capital investment could be required for facilities such as a visitor center, restroom facilities, parking areas, campgrounds, etc.

Table 10: National Historic Site Annual Operating Budgets

Historic Site	Historic Structure/ Feature	Annual Operating Budget	Annual Visitation
Carl Sandburg NHS, NC	Residence, dairy goat barn, farmland	\$ 932,000	38,000
Eisenhower NHS, PA	Residence, farmland, barns, cattle operation	\$1,036,000	76,000
Eugene O'Neill NHS, CA	Residence, courtyard, orchards	\$ 360,000	3,700
John Muir NHS, CA	14 room Muir house, Martinez Adobe, orchard, oak woodlands	\$ 639,000	27,000
Ulysses S Grant NHS, MO	Main house, barn, outbuildings	\$ 561,000	25,000
Vanderbilt Mansion NHS, NY	54 room mansion, gardens	\$1,111,000	389,000

Source: National Park Service, 2002

Affiliated Area Designation

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 NPS may instead recommend an alternative status, such as “affiliated area” (NPS 2001a). Affiliated areas are nationally significant areas not owned or administered by the NPS, but which draw on technical or financial assistance from the NPS (NPS 2001b). To be eligible for “affiliated area” status, an area’s resources must: (1) meet the same standards for national significance that apply to units of the national park system; (2) require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs; (3) be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and (4) be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the NPS and the other management entity (NPS *Management Policies*, 2001, Section 1.3.4). The draft study report evaluated the potential for “affiliated area” designation for the Milpitas Hacienda, assuming it would be managed by

California State Parks, and concluded that the area met the criteria for an affiliated area of the national park system.

Under continued Army management, the Milpitas Hacienda and other parts of Fort Hunter Liggett still meet the standards of national significance that apply to the national park system. However “affiliated area” status would only be feasible if the Army, as landowner and manager, is supportive of this designation. If the Army seeks this designation in the future, an evaluation would need to be completed addressing the criteria listed above.

Table 11: National Park Unit Annual Operating Budgets

Park	Annual Operating Budget	Acreage	Annual Visitation
Big Thicket National Preserve, TX	\$2,300,000	97,000	103,000
Great Basin National Park, NV	\$1,900,000	77,000	87,000
Lassen Volcanic National Park, CA	\$3,700,000	106,000	387,000
Lava Beds National Monument, CA	\$1,200,000	46,500	114,000
North Cascades National Park WA	\$5,500,000	684,000	390,000
Pinnacles National Monument, CA	\$2,200,000	17,600	165,000
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, CA	\$5,200,000	153,700	469,000
Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, KS	\$900,000	11,000	17,000

Source: National Park Service, 2002

Summary

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.