

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 5, 2002

Contact:
Joe Rosato
(916) 653-9472
California State Parks
Jrosa@parks.ca.gov

Paul Verke
(916) 654-1820
Cellular: (916) 996-9041

Jack London State Park Doubling in Size

*Land Transfer from
Department of Developmental Services
to California State Parks*

GLEN ELLEN – Jack London State Historic Park, a scenic and favorite visitor destination in the heart of California's beautiful wine country, will nearly double in size following the transfer of about 600 acres adjacent to the existing park from the state Department of Developmental Services to California State Parks, officials announced today.

"This transfer represents in a very real way the responsible use of our lands," said California State Parks Chief Deputy Director, Denzil Verardo. "Thanks to the Department of Developmental Services, this transfer will benefit our many park visitors because it will nearly double the size of this wonderful historic state park, as well as serve to permanently preserve and protect this valuable natural resource."

The 600-plus acre parcel is a spectacular addition to Jack London State Historic Park.

The newly acquired land includes golden hills and a mixed forest of oak, madrone, California buckeye, Douglas fir and a giant redwood, referred by some as "the grandmother tree," that is estimated to be between 1,800 and 2,000 years old. The parcel also includes an orchard that remains from an era when the sprawling Sonoma Developmental Center was expected to be self-sufficient and harvest its own crop of apples, pears, apricots and prunes that still grow on the trees today.

(more)

State Parks plans to use the property in part to extend existing multiple-use trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding. The transfer is a final step in a process that began four years ago when State Parks began studying potential uses of the property.

In another noteworthy achievement at the park, the first segment of the Sonoma Ridge Trail officially opened in ceremonies at the park in August. The 3.3 mile stretch of trail, a key link in the regional Bay Area Ridge Trail, runs from the heart of Jack London State Historic Park across the north and south forks of Asbury Creek and through Sonoma Developmental Center property.

Jack London State Historic Park is a memorial to writer and adventurer Jack London, who made his home at the site from 1905 until his death in 1916. The park was once part of the famous writer's 1,500-acre Beauty Ranch.

The park contains the cottage residence where he wrote books, short stories, articles and letters while he oversaw various agricultural enterprises. After London's death, his wife, Charmian, continued to live in the cottage until her death in 1955. It was her wish that the ranch be preserved in memory of Jack London and his work.

The park includes a museum in "The House of Happy Walls," which Mrs. London built in a redwood grove.

A three-quarter mile walk takes visitors to a dam, lake, and bathhouse built by London. Other hikes lead up through fir and oak woodlands to scenic views of the Valley of the Moon. Another trail leads to Jack London's grave and to "Wolf House," London's dream house, which was destroyed by fire in 1913. Bicycling and horseback riding are permitted on some trails. A summer horseback riding concession is available in the park. Camping is available at nearby Sugarloaf Ridge State Park.

The historic park is at 2400 London Ranch Road in Glen Ellen, about 20 minutes north of Sonoma.

###