

News Release



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State Parks Announces Public Hearing for Lower Topanga Canyon

SACRAMENTO - The State Department of Parks and Recreation will hold a public hearing Monday, July 9, 2001, on its proposal to acquire the property known as the lower Topanga Canyon area. The hearing will be held at the Topanga Canyon Elementary School auditorium, 141 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd, Topanga, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The purpose of the hearing is to hear and record comments from the general public and local public officials on the reasons why this property should or should not be acquired by the State Department of Parks and Recreation. State Parks staff members will make a presentation at the beginning of the meeting and will then open the meeting to public comments. A summary of these comments will be submitted to the state Legislature prior to acquisition. Under the Resources Code of the State of California, a public hearing is required on any park acquisition expenditure in excess of \$500,000.

In March of this year, the American Land Conservancy, a private, non-profit organization that facilitates the preservation of parkland and water resources throughout the nation, announced that it would purchase the property from LAACO, Ltd., the Los Angeles Athletic Club. The intent of ALC has been to purchase the 1,659-acre property and hold it for transfer to the California Department of Parks and Recreation when park bond money became available.

The money for acquiring lower Topanga Canyon will come from the Proposition 12 Parks Bond Act of 2000. Of the \$48 million allocated, \$43 million will be used to purchase the property and the remaining \$5 million will be used to relocate the tenants and begin the restoration of the site.

Water quality has been a serious problem in the area. During heavy rains and accompanying high water, poor water quality has forced the closure of Topanga State Beach on numerous occasions. More extensive tests are needed to identify the source of the fecal bacteria pollution, although it is suspected that the septic tanks in Topanga Canyon, which are located on a flood plain along Topanga Creek, could be a major source. It also could be caused or exacerbated by fecal material from corralled animals or wildlife in Topanga Canyon.

The lower Topanga property lies between the Pacific Coast Highway and Topanga State Park, with typical ocean-facing slopes of the Santa Monica Mountains, covered by native vegetation. Running north-south through the property is Topanga Creek and Topanga Boulevard.

When sale of the property is finalized, lower Topanga Canyon will be added to Topanga Canyon State Park, under the administration of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Lower Topanga Canyon will become a part of what is already considered the world's largest wildland within the boundaries of a major city, Los Angeles. Topanga Canyon State Park, now at 11,000 acres, will grow to 12,659 acres.

The Los Angeles area is one of the most park-starved areas in the nation. The national standard for parklands is 10 acres for every 1,000 people. The Los Angeles area has less than one acre per 1,000 people. That fact highlights the importance of protecting and preserving this ecologically important area as open space and recreation land. It will open to public access an area that contains preserved grasslands, meadows, wetlands, creeks, live oaks, cliffs and canyons that will provide extensive recreational opportunities for the Los Angeles region.

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