



The County of El Dorado

Chief Administrative Office

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DATE: April 26, 2021
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Vickie Sanders, Parks Manager
RE: Cronan Ranch

Background/ Context

Cronan Ranch is a parcel of land along the South Fork of the American River that is approximately 1,400 acres that was historically used since the 1890's for livestock grazing. The majority of the land was acquired by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) from the American River Conservancy in 2004 which included a parking area off Pedro Hill Rd. and 12 miles of ranching roads which are now maintained non-motorized multi-use trails. The BLM completed a management plan for Cronan Ranch in 2007 which became subject to the 2004 BLM South Fork of the American Management Plan.

The County's Cronan Ranch parcel was purchased in 2004 as authorized by Board of Supervisors on May 11, 2004 via a "contribution of \$280,000 from the \$1.7 million pool of unspent funds allocated to El Dorado County from a State bond measure for development of local recreation (Proposition 40), to be used for the acquisition and development of a Regional Trails Park on the South Fork of the American River; specifically, \$180,000 would be used to purchase a 40-acre portion of the Cronin Ranch, off Pedro Hill Road and Highway 49, for eventual development of an equestrian center and trail staging area, and \$100,000 would be in the form of a grant to the American River Conservancy to assist in the completed acquisition of the adjoining property and the design and construction of the trail system". The BOS action was supported by a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission at their May 10, 2004 meeting. An increase in the acquisition acreage from 40 acres to 62 acres was approved at the July 20, 2004 BOS meeting.

Past Activities

Since the opening of the Cronan Ranch lands the BLM has developed two parking areas upstream near Greenwood Creek (Greenwood Creek parking area and Magnolia Ranch parking area) adjacent to Hwy 49.

In 2010 the South Fork of American River Trail was opened connecting Cronan Ranch to a trail system that extends downstream to California State Parks Skunk Hollow parking area adjacent to Folsom Reservoir and upstream to Greenwood Creek.

The Greenwood Creek parking area is not open to vehicles with trailers and the section of trail from Skunk Hollow is not open to equestrian use. There is a new parking area (Acorn Cr.) which will open this year near Skunk Hollow parking area which will allow for equestrian vehicle parking and connectivity to the trail section downstream of Cronan Ranch.

The BLM has installed vault toilets at their parking areas and along the river. They also have actively been working on reducing the level of invasive star thistle through the use of grazing and herbicides at Cronan Ranch.

Present Activities

The County has not developed any parking or new trails on its 62 acres at Cronan Ranch. A pre-existing section of ranch road bisects the property and is part of the used trail system. No plans for the County parcel have been adopted.

The County Parks Master Plan identifies Cronan Ranch as a possible regional park. The plan states this about Cronan Ranch: *“There are various uses that could be implemented at this location that would provide recreation value to County residents and visitors without degrading the open space values of Cronan Ranch. Community input gathered for this Master Plan suggested uses for this parcel including an equestrian arena, overnight camping, covered picnic area, restrooms, play structures, and disc golf. A concept plan needs to be developed for this parcel that identifies which uses are most appropriate for the site and provide the Cronan Ranch Regional Trails Park greatest value to local residents as well as visitors. With a concept plan in place, efforts to secure implementation resources and operational agreements can be pursued.”*

The BLM Cronan Ranch parking area is very popular and regularly reaches capacity. BLM would like to expand the parking area adjacent to the County parcel. BLM has come to the County with plans to reconfigure and expand the parking area using County property. This would allow for more equestrian and other trail user parking which is in demand. BLM would need 2-3 acres of County land to develop the parking area.