

County Considers Leasing Quail Hollow Ranch For Many Purposes

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County Parks Director Larry Norris wants the county to begin serious negotiations to lease the 300-acre Quail Hollow Ranch near Ben Lomond from the Santa Clara County Office of Education.

Daytime recreation, camping, outdoor education, water recharge and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders are some of the uses of the acreage being proposed by Norris and leaders of several other local public agencies.

County supervisors Tuesday will consider Norris' proposal to adopt a resolution indicating the county's desire to lease the property contingent upon the support of other local public agencies interested in the site.

Norris further is requesting that supervisors Tuesday direct his office to return a resolution July 14 notifying Santa Clara County's superintendent of schools of this county's interest in a five-year lease of the property for planning purposes.

This lease, Norris is suggesting, also would contain an automatic renewal clause so that this county could continue leasing the site after the five years if it desired to do so.

Norris also is asking supervisors Tuesday to direct his office and the county administrative officer to put together a temporary agency coalition agreement so local public agencies interested in the site may plan uses for it.

Agencies other than the county Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services Department interested in the Quail Hollow Road site include the San Lorenzo Valley County Water District, the county Office of Education and the county Probation Department.

The Water District is looking at the site as the possible location for water recharge ponds. The ponds could allow water to soak back into the underground water source used by the district.

The Water District currently is having a geologist study the potential of the area for recharge.

The county Office of Education is interested in Quail Hollow Ranch for outdoor education. Presently, the office offers outdoor education programs for approximately 2,600 students a year at Camp Hammer and Mount Cross in the San Lorenzo Valley.

But the fees the county Office of Education must pay to use those facilities keep increasing, resulting in the office to look seriously at Quail Hollow Ranch.

In a letter to supervisors, Norris notes, "All educational institutions in the county could utilize Quail Hollow to some degree while building trails, classifying the environment and creating support facilities under a general plan of development.

"The 'spin-off' educational programs would surely flourish with groups such as the Sierra Club and Audubon Society. The important factor of educational institution involvement would negate the need for substantial county operating funds."

Norris pointed out that a plan would have to be worked out whereby all agencies interested in using Quail Hollow would share in the cost of leasing and maintaining the property.

Anne Leonard, a consultant, also is investigating the potential use of the site by the county Probation Department for a ranch-like rehabilitation center for juvenile offenders. Norris notes in the letter that these juveniles

could perform maintenance on the ranch grounds.

However, Norris told The Sentinel that such a rehabilitation center would have to be isolated from the public use areas proposed for Quail Hollow Ranch.

Norris' department is proposing that the ranch also be used for a blend of day use and group camping activities. Fees for day-use and camping could help pay for the leasing of the site, he said.

Glenn Hoffmann, Santa Clara County superintendent of schools, already has contacted county supervisors with a tentative lease proposal.

Under Hoffman's proposal, the county would enter into a 25-year lease. The first year, the county would pay Santa Clara \$150,000 and this annual payment would be adjusted each year according to the Consumer Price Index (indicating inflation) for the San Francisco Bay Area.

Norris explained he's suggesting a shorter lease for planning purposes to avoid the situation of getting into a

long-term lease and then discovering the county is unable to finance all the plans for the ranch. During the proposed five-year period, interested public agencies could run pilot programs, he said.

Norris added that he sees the county eventually entering into a long-term lease that could extend from 50-99 years. The water district in particular will need to be guaranteed 50-99 years of use if it pursues an extensive water development program.

While Norris' present proposal doesn't mention costs, he said his eventual recommendation to supervisors will be "drastically less" than the \$150,000-plus a year being suggested by Hoffmann.

The Quail Hollow Ranch was purchased by the Santa Clara County Office of Education for \$600,000 in 1974 for day use programs. Rising costs of operation and the distance of the site from Santa Clara schools has caused the office in recent years to look into either selling or leasing the ranch.

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