

Press Release
Immediate Release

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San Dieguito River Park Acquires Sikes Adobe Historic Farmhouse site

The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority announced today that it has completed the much anticipated purchase of the Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead from the City of San Diego for the sum of \$170,000. The funds for the purchase were provided by the County of San Diego. The parcel consists of 5.742 acres and is located immediately south of the San Diego-Escondido municipal boundary, east of Interstate 15 on Sunset Drive. The City of San Diego listed the Zenas Sikes Adobe on its Historic Resources register in 1988. The State of California also recognized its significance through its inclusion as a Point of Historical Interest in May of 1993.

The Mule Hill/San Pasqual trail head lies one hundred yards from the location of the Sikes Adobe. This ten-mile-long trail is part of the San Dieguito River Park's planned 55-mile "Coast to Crest" trail system.

The Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead fell victim to the Witch Creek fire on October 22, 2007. The house, which the River Park had restored in 2003, was completely consumed, as well as much of the surrounding grounds. The San Dieguito River Park JPA will rebuild the farmhouse using historic documentation obtained during the 2003 restoration and funds provided through emergency stabilization by FEMA and reconstruction through insurance. The rebuilding efforts will begin late this summer upon completion of the archaeological testing and securing new building permits. It is hoped that the farmhouse will be fully restored, for the second time, by the spring of 2009.

This site is significant as one of the oldest structures in San Diego County and one of the few remaining adobes. It represents the farming and ranching history of the County, exemplified by a family of Americans from the eastern states. The Sikes settled in California as a result of the gold rush, and remained to build the newly admitted state. During the decades of the 1870s and '80s the San Pasqual Valley was transformed from the resource-based economy of comparatively small numbers of Native Americans to an intensive agricultural expansion by Euro-American farmers such as the Sikes family.

In addition to the historic documentation, the River Park will utilize additional archaeological testing done in underlying portions of the house which were not exposed prior to the fire. Materials recovered from this testing will be utilized in the interpretation of the farmstead's history, and will find a permanent home at either the reconstructed Sikes Adobe Historic Farmstead or the San Diego Archaeological Center on San Pasqual Valley Road.

The Witch Fire caused damage to the site beyond the farmhouse. Several of the pepper trees planted on Sunset Drive by River Park volunteers were burned. A water tank and windmill had been built and installed on the west side of the house through a cooperative effort between the Escondido and Rancho Bernardo Rotary Clubs in 2005. The water tank was severely damaged, but the windmill was only partially burned at its base. Just west of the water tank and windmill were the remains of a smaller adobe building, the Creamery. This structure was scheduled for restoration when the fire came through. Its roof had collapsed prior to the fire, causing its adobe walls to deteriorate through exposure to rain.

Items in the interior of the house were also damaged or lost completely. The Colonial Dames of America had assisted the River Park with the restoration and installation of a manta ceiling and with the exact reproduction of wallpaper original to the house. Docent volunteers working at the Sikes Adobe had donated period objects of their own purchase to the house, which was just beginning to be furnished. Docents enabled the River Park to open the house to the public on weekend afternoons. Guided tours were available through appointment. Many of the River Park visitors who came to hike the trails, would stop and spend a few minutes learning about the history of the Sikes Adobe. Weekend workshops and classes were offered at the Sikes Adobe by the River Park, sometimes in conjunction with the San Diego Archaeological Center. With the rebuilding of the Sikes Adobe and its Creamery, along with the other structures which add to the interpretation of this historic farmstead such as the water tank and gardens, these programs will begin again.

The portion of the parcel located north of the Sikes Adobe farmhouse will be upgraded, thanks to a \$15,000 grant from the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy. Lodge pole fencing and a secure gate will be installed and the dirt lot graded to provide for an enhanced trail head. Native plants along the creek are being encouraged, thanks to volunteer weed abatement programs. Picnic tables will be added to the newly fenced area.

The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority was formed in 1989 by five municipalities (the Cities of San Diego, Del Mar, Solana Beach, Escondido and Poway) and the County of San Diego for the purpose of preserving and interpreting the natural and cultural resources of the San Dieguito River Valley. In 2003, the River Park restored the Sikes Adobe Farmhouse under a management agreement with the owner, the City of San Diego.

The City of San Diego acquired the house in 1925 as part of the acquisition of Lake Hodges. The house had fallen into disrepair and was unoccupied at the time that restoration efforts, under the River Park's management, began in 2003. The restoration, undertaken by IS Architecture of La Jolla and Mark Sauer and Company Construction of Corona, was completed in January of 2004, after months of analysis of the building's historic materials, including adobe, paint and wall paper. The construction history of the house has been documented, using evidence determined in part by archaeological excavations under portions of the house.

For further information on the Sikes Adobe, the Mule Hill/San Pasqual Valley trail or the San Dieguito River Park, please call (858) 674-2270 or visit their website at www.sdrp.org.

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