

\$3M in state budget to manage open space at SDC

In his recently announced budget, Gov.

Gavin Newsom included \$3 million to fund oversight of about 765 acres of the 945-acre Sonoma Developmental Center as open space.

While housing and other development is expected around the campus area of the Eldridge property, the bulk of the land will remain open space that will be managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

The money would cover California State Parks' equipment and operational costs, and fund projects such as fire mitigation and improvements for habitat and the public. Under the proposal, California State Parks can also work with local partners including Sonoma County Regional Parks to best protect and utilize the land.

"Recognizing the value of this precious land, we passed a law to preserve it for generations to come.

Now we have the means to do it," State Sen. Bill Dodd, D-Napa, said in a press release. "Everyone is eager to see it properly managed for the benefit of all Sonoma County residents. This budget proposal achieves that through oversight by State Parks, in partnership with local parks departments and nonprofits. I thank Sen. McGuire for being such a great partner as well as community members for continuing to support and advocate for this incomparable open space. We'll be working together to ensure the proposal is finalized and approved by the Legislature this summer."

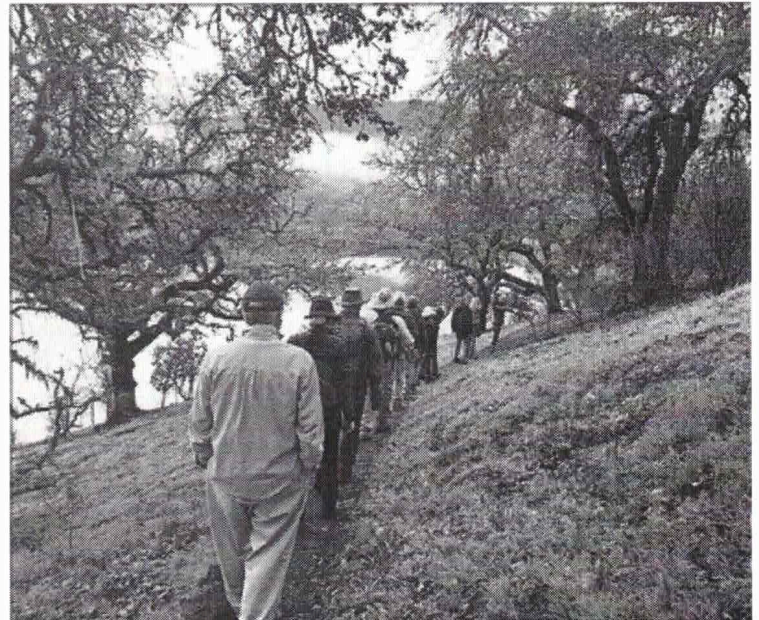
Preservation of the land was previously guaranteed under a law secured by Dodd and McGuire several years ago.

"The open space and wildlands have always been a treasured part of the property and thanks to today's state investment, the open space will be protected forever. Sen. Dodd and I made a promise to the community years ago that the vast majority of the SDC property would be permanently protected. And, today, that promise

was kept. Over 80% of the property will be permanently protected by the state," said Sen. Mike McGuire, D-North Coast, in the release. "Obviously, there's more work to come and I'm excited to partner with Sen. Dodd to flesh out the final details on the open space and public access in the coming few months."

These senators also helped secure \$700,000 in December to build a memorial for the estimated 1,400 people who are buried in mostly unmarked graves on the site. The campus section of the property, which operated as a care facility for 128 years until it was closed in 2018, is under review by the state at the moment. After a long process and a series of proposals, the Department of General Services is considering which plan will best suit the state's needs.

There is no ETA on when the state will make a final decision on the property.



The open space at SDC, with its myriad hiking trails, will benefit from added state funding in this latest budget.