

Jack London park gets addition

Camp Via, an 11-acre property, now part of state historic park



The Press Democrat file

BY PHIL BARBER THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Jack London State Historic Park just got a little bigger.

California State Parks and the state Department of General Services announced Monday that 11.4-acre Camp Via is being transferred to the state historic park that includes the Sonoma Mountain estate of famed novelist Jack London.

Camp Via was part of the former Sonoma Developmental Center campus, a spot for the institution's guests to take part in overnight educational and recreational visits.

When the state deeded 650 acres of Sonoma Development Center land to Jack London State Historic Park in January, Camp Via became an island of potentially private ownership surrounded by protected open space. Monday's move ensures that land will be protected, in addition improving viability of an important wildlife corridor.

The state is attempting to sell the developmental center's 180-acre core campus, which sits at the base of the public land, and is currently in negotiations with Napa-based developer Keith Rogal and his partner, the Grupe Company.

"This land transfer is more good news for Sonoma County and all of California," Wade Crowfoot, secretary of the state's Natural Resources Agency, said in a news release. "Expanding our State Parks like this enables more outdoor recreation and greater environmental protection. It also helps meet our ... commitment to conserve 30% of the state's land by 2030."

In the release, Matt Lefferts, executive director of Jack London Park Partners — a nonprofit organization that formed in 2012 when budget constraints threatened the park's operations — focused on Camp Via's strategic location.

"The Camp is optimally positioned at the gateway of the historic orchard and the park's hiking trails on the southern boundary, and we look forward to working with California State Parks and the community to revitalize this amazing new Park resource," Lefferts said.

Camp Via includes seven cabins, three restrooms, an amphitheater, dining hall, water tower, barbecue pits and shower room, all constructed in the 1960s.