



## Sonoma Mountain Preservation

5850 Grove Street Sonoma CA 95476  
web site : [sonomamountain.org](http://sonomamountain.org)

August 29, 2015

Department of Developmental Services  
Attn: Cindy Coppage  
1600 9th Street, Room 340, M.S. 3-17  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
RE: Comments on Sonoma Developmental Center Closure Plan

Dear Director Rogers and Ms. Coppage:

Sonoma Mountain Preservation, an all-volunteer community non-profit organization, has been working to preserve and protect the lands on Sonoma Mountain for over twenty years. We have been members of the SDC Coalition since its inception.

We are submitting our written comments for your consideration as you develop the SDC closure plan that will be submitted by your Department to the Legislature for its review on or before October 1, 2015.

SMP was instrumental in the transfer, in 2002, of 600 acres of SDC open space to Jack London State Historic Park.

SMP continues to take a keen interest in preserving the remaining scenic wild lands and open space of SDC—all 750 acres. We also strongly urge DDS and the State to recognize in the closure plan that *the future of SDC residents, staff and the land are all connected*.

The open space and natural lands of the property have been directly beneficial to the well-being of the SDC residents, employees, and the neighboring communities. The site is widely utilized by the community for recreation and enjoyment. Its tranquil setting and the ability for SDC's developmentally disabled clients to get outside, walk around and enjoy nature has provided peace of mind and therapeutic benefits for residents, and for the family members and guardians who care deeply about their loved ones. You have heard remarks from families and members of the community about the importance of this tranquility at the several community input meetings you have organized and attended.

In order to fully assess and protect these resources, SMP believes it is essential that the State:

- Coordinate a complete biological and cultural resource assessments of the SDC property with the California Department of General Services (DGS), the Legislature and the California Natural Resources Agency, that builds on the work of the April 2014 “Sonoma Developmental Center Draft Resource Assessment” and share the data with SDC Coalition and the general public.
- Work with Sonoma County and the SDC Coalition to prepare a summary of the property’s contributions towards the State’s environmental goals, including the following areas:
  - Water management and conservation
  - Climate change (note that protecting these lands is fully in accord with Governor Brown’s goals for California’s response to climate change)
  - Habitat and natural resource protection
  - How access to nature benefits public health
- Initiate a collaborative process with DGS, the California Natural Resources Agency, California State Parks, Sonoma County and other stakeholders to ensure permanent protection of the critical open space lands on the SDC site.

Finally, we support the SDC Coalition’s proposed vision statement for the future of SDC:

*Create a public-private partnership driven by community ideas and values that showcases the site’s history, maintains critical services for the developmentally disabled, provides opportunities for creative reuse of SDC’s assets, and preserves the natural resources and open space of the site.*

The SDC Coalition written comments—filed with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) on August 7, 2015—are a comprehensive set of recommendations that, if adopted as part of the closure plan, will:

- Ensure the well-being of the current residents
- Create future job opportunities for SDC employees
- Set the stage for the permanent protection of the tremendous open space and natural resource assets of the SDC property.

As you have heard over and over in spoken and written comments, the Sonoma Valley community is united in the belief that the State should not simply close SDC and sell the land as surplus property. This is a unique property; it calls for a unique planning approach. Please incorporate these recommendations into the closure plan.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

Meg Beeler

Chair, Sonoma Mountain Preservation

[www.sonomamountain.org](http://www.sonomamountain.org)

*Sonoma Mountain Preservation seeks to preserve the scenic, agricultural, and natural resources of Sonoma Mountain; to expand recreational opportunities on the mountain; and to provide a forum for constructive discussion of issues relating to the mountain.*