

MEDIA RELEASE

City of San Juan Capistrano • 32400 Paseo Adelanto • San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675
949-493-1171 • Fax: 949-493-1053

For Immediate Release

Date: January 20, 2010

Contact: Cindy Russell

Phone: (949) 443-6301

City closes escrow on 132 acres of land from Rancho Mission Viejo, LLC

The City closed escrow today on 132 acres of land from Rancho Mission Viejo, LLC, owners and managers of the 23,000-acre Rancho Mission Viejo cattle ranch and lease land operation in Southeast Orange County. The addition of this property to San Jan Capistrano will help create a new eastern gateway into the City and complement San Juan Capistrano's equestrian lifestyle and expanding open space portfolio.

The City recently annexed the property and then acquired the valuable entitled undeveloped land east of San Juan Capistrano for \$27.5 million. The purchase is funded from the open space bond approved by voters in November 2008.

"This property acquisition caps a nine-year journey to preserve a key property that will forever define the eastern entry to our historic city," said Mark Nielsen, Chairman of the Open Space Committee. "Not only have our citizens preserved an internationally recognized equestrian open space facility from being converted to residential buildings, but we have added additional lands that will provide ongoing revenue to help maintain our other open space for future generations. I am thankful to our citizens and Rancho Mission Viejo for each one's contribution in making this day possible."

Purchasing the land, commonly known as "the ranch field offices/lemon grove area" next to Ortega Highway and the "rodeo/polo grounds" south of Ortega Highway from City limits to La Pata Avenue, benefits the community as a whole – providing more equestrian, recreational and agricultural areas and preservation of 42 acres of open space/creek habitat. The property is forever restricted to these uses and also provides for the continuation of the annual Rancho Mission Viejo Rodeo.

"It is now this Council's responsibility to ensure that our residents unprecedented trust in giving us \$30 million to buy open space is justified by making sure that we are good stewards of this property and that it is maintained and used for their benefit," said Mayor Dr. Londres Uso.

Acquiring the property has been more than a year in the making, as City and Ranch officials have worked diligently on a plan that will benefit future generations to come. The annexation and ownership of this open space area also gives the City additional control over the proposed extension of San Juan Creek Road as well as the potential to access 100 acres of City-owned open space just west of La Pata Road, behind the homes along the south side of San Juan Creek Road. This would provide another connection to current City-owned trails.

"All of us at Ranch Headquarters are thrilled to provide more than 130 acres of the Ranch's most valuable property to the people of San Juan Capistrano," said Anthony R. Moiso, president and chief executive officer of Rancho Mission Viejo, LLC. "For 128 years now, my family and I have shared a proud past with San Juan Capistrano. Now, with the land's preservation, we join together to help create a great future in a new place where our ranching and rural equestrian history is celebrated, a new eastern gateway into the City is established, open space is preserved and generations of children will forever play on and explore this important land."

The existing rodeo/polo grounds property is a well-known premier venue for competitive recreation events, shows and other activities in Southern California such as English horse shows, Western horse shows, the annual Rodeo, soccer tournaments, antique car shows, dog shows, and several other youth athletic events. The venue will be named the "*Rancho Mission Viejo Riding Park at San Juan Capistrano.*"

###