**Update on Camp Mabel French**

The Los Padres Council, Boy Scouts of America has operated, improved, and maintained Camp Mabel French located near Lake Lopez in Arroyo Grande, for over 40 years. While we have been the operator, the County of San Luis Obispo owns the property and gave us a long-term lease to provide a youth camping opportunity for Scouts and other youth on the central coast. While we have appreciated having this wonderful resource, it has posed a continuing challenge to operate it in a financially stable manner. For the last year, the Los Padres Council Board of Directors has had discussions and community forums on how to operate Camp French in a manner that does not place a financial drain on the Council’s limited resources. After these forums and discussions with many volunteers, the Los Padres Council’s Executive Board concluded that it could no longer afford to operate Camp Mabel French at the significant operational losses that we sustained on an annual basis.

Over the last six months, we have been in discussions with San Luis Obispo County to determine their interest in operating Camp Mabel French under the Parks and Recreation department. The County stated they would be most interested in operating Camp Mabel French. In January, we proposed an amendment to our lease with San Luis Obispo County to allow for a 60-day notice of termination. That amendment was accepted by the County. A committee of Scouters from our Council reviewed what we felt were important points in terminating the lease, yet allowing Scouting groups and others to still have access to this wonderful camp. We shared these points with the County, and received positive feedback on all of our issues, and also received a “business plan” from the County that stated their intent to operate Camp Mabel French in a manner similar to what the Los Padres Council had been doing.

With that information, the Los Padres Council Executive Board submitted a letter to the County of San Luis Obispo exercising its option to terminate the lease on Camp Mabel French effective April 30, 2014. On May 1, 2014, the San Luis Obispo County Parks & Recreation Department will begin the operation, maintenance, and improvement of Camp Mabel French as part of the Lake Lopez Recreation Area.

All existing reservations by Scouting units and other groups for dates after April 30, 2014 will be honored by the San Luis Obispo County Parks & Recreation Department. Those holding reservations for dates after April 30, 2014 will need to contact Larry Iaquinto (at 781-5209 or e-mail liaquinto@co.slo.ca.us) to finalize your reservations and arrange for payment. Beginning May 1, 2014, Scouting units and community groups wishing to reserve Camp Mabel French after April 30, 2014 will need to go to the San Luis Obispo County Parks & Recreation on-line reservation system ([www.slocountyparks.com](http://www.slocountyparks.com) and click on make reservations). Before May 1, 2014 reservations may continue to be made by calling Dana Mendoza at the Rancho Alegre Program office, 686-5167 or by e-mailing alegre@hughes.net,

**WHAT WILL NOT CHANGE APRIL 30, 2014?**

* It will still be called Camp Mabel French
* Reservations can be made up to a year in advance
* It will remain a group camp with campsites accommodating from 25 to 100 people
* The dining hall and kitchen will be available for reservations (on a first come, first served basis)
* Camporees, Pack graduations, troop outings, etc. can still be held
* Rates will remain affordable, as the San Luis Obispo County Parks & Recreation Department will be offering a discount rate for all non-profit youth oriented groups (in some cases you may actually pay less than what you paid under the Los Padres Council’s management of the camp)
* There will be opportunities for service projects and OA Ordeals at the camp

**WHAT WILL CHANGE AFTER APRIL 30, 2014?**

* Entrance to Camp Mabel French will be through the Lake Lopez entrance station (saving 6 miles of travel on Upper Lopez Canyon Road)
* Reservations will be handled through the San Luis Obispo County Parks on-line reservations system
* There will be upgrades to the existing restrooms to ensure handicapped accessibility
* Current camping areas will be re-configured to 7 group sites, (with capacities between 25 and 100 persons) and most of the site names currently in use will remain the same.
* Exclusive use of Camp Mabel French will not be available unless the entire camp and all sites are rented by the group wishing the exclusive usage
* Alcoholic beverages will be allowed at the camp
* The Lake Lopez Recreation Area rangers and maintenance staff will manage the camp and provide service to users
* Payment for reservations will be done at the time of the reservation
* The San Luis Obispo County Parks & Recreation Department plans many new upgrades to the camping facilities, including restrooms upgrades, eventually a bridge across the creek allowing access even when the creek is flowing
* The San Luis Obispo County Parks & Recreation Department will allow vehicles in the campsites

We believe that San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation will be a great partner for Scouting units as they begin the operation of Camp Mabel French and that our Scouting families will still be able to enjoy the usage they have had over the last 40 years under the San Luis Obispo County Parks & Recreation Department’s stewardship.

Should you have any questions, please contact Ron Walsh, Council Program Director at 686-5167 or via e-mail rwalsh@bsamail.org