

# A Witness to History

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM)** public lands surrounding Williams Hill near San Ardo in Monterey County offer a multitude of outdoor recreational opportunities and a window into historic times. Imagine watching the building of a Spanish mission, a colonizing expedition to San Francisco with Juan Bautista de Anza passing by, Tiburcio Vásquez robbing a stagecoach or being a special guest of William Randolph Hearst at his Hacienda. The sky is the limit—literally—in this recreation area. Using the newly established campground as a staging area from which to explore, visitors of all ages will enjoy all that Williams Hill has to offer. Take a mountain bike or a horse over the gravel roads found intersecting the recreation area. When the sun sets for the day, enjoy the spectacular views of the night sky that awed even the earliest settlers from this perch over 2700 feet in elevation. The hunter in your group will enjoy a chance to hunt deer, wild pig, upland game birds and other small game and varmints. Don't miss the opportunity to walk among knobcone pine trees, Bush poppies and Eastwood Manzanitas or to catch a glimpse of wild cats, raccoons or skunks. Go out, explore and be a part of the history of Williams Hill.

Mission San Antonio de Padua, BLM Photo



## Religious Retreat

Standing tall among the hills of the Salinas Valley, Williams Hill watched as some of California's most important history took place. Missions were significant in the Spanish Empire's effort to convert Native Americans to Christianity and also served as a refuge for travelers. Upon selection of the site for Mission San Antonio de Padua on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1771, ceremonial bells were rung on the limbs of an oak tree, making it the third oldest mission in Alta California. Unfortunately, unreliable water sources forced the mission site to be relocated further up the Los Robles Valley in 1773.

The Mission San Antonio de Padua was the first building to use fired-tiled roofing and the site of the first Christian wedding performed in Alta California. Missions lost government funding after Mexico achieved independence and the building went into a state of neglect. After California became a part of the United States, the mission and 33 acres were formally "returned" to the church in 1863. An estimated 1300 people lived at the Mission during its height, but that was only the beginning of the people that Williams Hill would welcome.

Juan Bautista de Anza, BLM Photo.

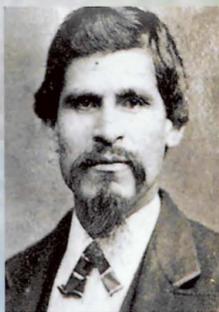


## Colonizers Coming

In 1775, while the colonists in the east were sowing the seeds of independence from Britain, Juan Bautista de Anza, a Spanish explorer, led a small military unit and a party of about 240 men, women, and children to colonize the San Francisco Bay Area for Spain.

Risking death by starvation, Indian attacks and severe weather, they set out from Tubac, Arizona on October 23rd for a five month journey in hopes of establishing a Spanish colony near present-day San Francisco. Once in California, the party marched north along the El Camino Real, (now Highway 101) traveling through present day BLM public lands on the former Fort Ord near Monterey. The Anza Expedition would lay the foundation for other important players in the history of California and Williams Hill would continue to be a spectator through it all.

Tiburcio Vásquez, Santa Cruz Public Library Photo.



## Masked Bandit Hideout

A descendent of a colonizer with the Anza party, Tiburcio Vásquez is widely known for being a bandit during the 19th century. He also used the shadows of Williams Hill to hideout. One story recounts Vásquez waiting for the stagecoach traveling from King City to Jolon. Vásquez, with his face covered, held up the stagecoach and fled with cash from the stagecoach riders. He rode toward the city of Jolon, casually entered the Duton's Inn, sat down with a drink and acted surprised when news hit there was a stagecoach hold up. Vásquez showed his softer side by buying the penniless stagecoach passengers drinks and even volunteered to go with the posse to catch the bandits. Vásquez knew the value of having Williams Hill and the surrounding hills to use as a hideout—and it was not long before more famous Americans knew it too.

Hearst Hacienda, BLM Photo.



## Playground for the Rich

Williams Hill saw construction of another building of significance and the antics of one of America's richest men, William Randolph Hearst. Smaller than the famed "Castle" in San Simeon, the "Hacienda" was built on land that Hearst acquired at the turn of the 20th century, now part of present-day Fort Hunter Liggett and within sight of the Mission San Antonio de Padua. In 1929, Hearst hired architect Julia Morgan and construction began on the Hacienda. Morgan would later be the architect to design the Castle in San Simeon.

Although the original intent of the building is still a mystery, the Hacienda served as a place for famous people to congregate and socialize with Hearst. People known to have spent time on the Hearst property and exploring the areas around Williams Hill were Will Rogers, Clark Gable, and Herbert Hoover. Among other areas, Williams Hill afforded seclusion for these famous people.

The Mission San Antonio de Padua, Juan Bautista de Anza, Tiburcio Vásquez and Hearst's Hacienda are important to the history of the Salinas Valley hills and all were under the watchful gaze of Williams Hill as California history unfolded. The people and places are a testament to the rich history of California's Salinas Valley and the importance of exploring all there is to offer at Williams Hill Recreation Area.

## Star Gazing

For centuries, people have turned to the night sky for calendar development, global positioning and even predicting the future. For as long as humans have been walking California's lands, the sky has been something to appreciate.

Nearly every month of the year a meteor shower can be seen: Look to the sky in late December/early January for the Quaranitids; April for the Lyrids; August for the Perseids and November for the Leonids, just to name a few. Finding a spot at Williams Hill to view the night sky is easy. Among the better spots are knobs and clearings following road W1 south from the campground. Modern star gazing can be simple—take a blanket, bug spray and a red-filtered flashlight to read star charts and books while waiting for the show to begin. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for your eyes to adjust. Sit back, relax and enjoy all that the night sky has to show off.



Leonid fireball from 2001 shower, NASA Photo.

## How Can I Help?

Each year, thousands of pounds of trash are hauled off public lands. Helping to make sure these lands stay clean is up to everyone using them; pack out all garbage and do not litter. It is illegal to pollute or dump trash on any public lands or waters. If you see anyone pollute or dump trash, please do not approach. Instead, call [1-888-DFG-CALTIP](tel:1-888-DFG-CALTIP) (1-888-334-2258) 24-hours-a-day/7-days-a-week.



Volunteers working on BLM land, BLM photo.

Want to volunteer on your public lands? Anyone over the age of 18 years can volunteer. Youths must volunteer with a parent/guardian or be part of an organized school, civic or church group with written consent. To become a volunteer, apply at [Volunteer.gov](http://Volunteer.gov) and/or contact the Volunteer Coordinator in the Hollister Field Office at 831-630-5035.

## Camping

Established in 2010 with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, a campground with seven sites awaits your arrival. Each campsite is equipped with a covered picnic table and fire ring. There is a vault toilet restroom available at this location, but no other facilities exist. Camping is limited to 14 days within any 28 day period. Primitive, dispersed camping opportunities are also available, but vehicles are restricted to designated routes.

Please practice Leave No Trace® principles when visiting all public lands.



Campsite at Williams Hill, BLM Photo

## Hunting

The main game species on BLM public lands within the area consist primarily of upland game birds, wild pig and deer. BLM and California Department of Fish and Game manage game animals for hunting by providing watering sites (guzzlers) and planting cover shrubs. Field office regulations also stipulate no shooting within 100 yards (300 feet) of any developed area.

A special thank you to Joan Steele of the Mission San Antonio de Padua and staff at Ft. Hunter Liggett for their help in preparation of this brochure.

USE, SHARE, APPRECIATE!



Bureau of Land Management  
Central Coast Field Office  
940 2nd Avenue  
Marina, California 93933  
Phone: 831-582-2200

Los Padres National Forest  
Monterey Ranger District Office  
406 S. Mildred St.  
King City, CA 93930  
US Forest Service  
831-385-5434

San Lorenzo County Park  
1160 Broadway St.  
King City, CA 93930  
Monterey County Parks Dept  
800-588-2267

Lake Nacimiento County Park  
16 Miles NW of Hwy 101 in  
Paso Robles, CA 93446  
Monterey County Parks Dept

Monterey County Parks Dept  
800-588-2267

Lake San Antonio Recreation Area  
2091 New Playto Rd.  
Bradley, CA 93426  
Monterey County Parks Dept

Fort Hunter Liggett  
20 miles south of King City  
Jolon, CA 93930  
US Army  
(831) 386-3310

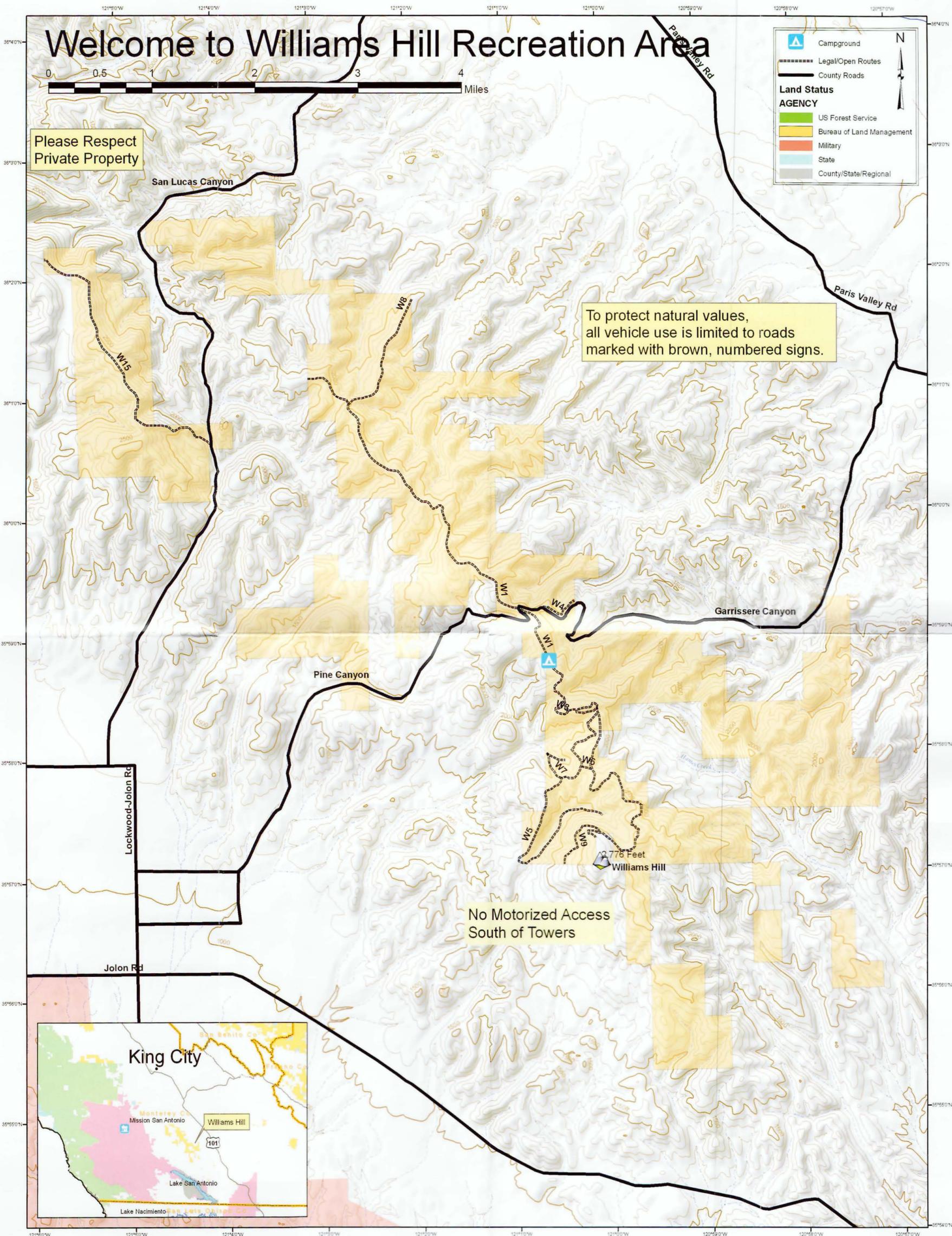
## Other Local Resources

Williams Hill

BLM

Hollister Field Office





**The Ten Essentials**

Packing these items whenever you venture into the backcountry, even on day hikes or drives, is a good habit to acquire. On a routine trip you may only use a few of them. Yet you'll probably never fully appreciate the value of the Ten Essentials until you *really* need one of them.

1. Map
2. Compass
3. Sunglasses and Sunscreen
4. Extra Clothing
5. Headlamp/Flashlight
6. First Aid Supplies
7. Fire-starting Material
8. Matches
9. Knife
10. Extra Food & Water

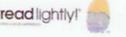
**Leave No Trace** ([www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org))



As more people use parks and recreation facilities, LEAVE NO TRACE® guidelines become even more important for outdoor visitors. Leave No Trace is a plan that helps people to be more concerned about their environment and to help them protect it for future generations. Leave No Trace applies in the frontcountry as much as it does in the wilderness (backcountry).

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

**Tread Lightly** ([www.treadlightly.org](http://www.treadlightly.org))



1. **Travel responsibly** on designated roads and trails or in permitted areas.
2. **Respect the rights of others** including private property owners and all recreational trail users, campers and others to allow them to enjoy their recreational activities undisturbed.
3. **Educate yourself** by obtaining travel maps and regulations from public agencies, planning for your trip, taking recreation skills classes, and knowing how to use and operate your equipment safely.
4. **Avoid sensitive areas** such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands and streams, unless on designated routes. This protects wildlife habitat and sensitive soils from damage.
5. **Do your part** by leaving the area better than you found it, properly disposing of waste, minimizing the use of fire, avoiding the spread of invasive species, restoring degraded areas, and joining a local enthusiast organization.

**RULES REGARDING FIRE USE**

Campers are required to have a FREE California Campfire Permit for any fire OUTSIDE of designated fire rings. Permits can be obtained from the Hollister Field Office and are generally not issued during the dry season (summer). Additional requirements include carrying water and a shovel to make sure the campfire is dead out before leaving the area. Never attempt to build a campfire during a windy day or leave the campfire unattended.



Use your smart phone's QR Code Reader App to scan the code and download directions to the campground at Williams Hill. Cell phone service is not available in all areas.



**Restriction on Lead Ammunition**

In order to prevent the accidental poisoning of California condors, lead ammunition has been banned for most kinds of hunting.

U.S. Bureau Of Land Management  
 Hollister Field Office  
 20 Hamilton Court  
 Hollister, CA 95023  
 (831) 630-5000  
[www.blm.gov/ca/hollister](http://www.blm.gov/ca/hollister)