



## *La Kretz Center for California Conservation Science*



### **UCLA establishes La Kretz Center for California Conservation Science**

Created through a gift from UCLA alumnus and philanthropist Morton La Kretz, the Center aims to preserve California's biodiversity and ecosystems through research, education and public outreach in a groundbreaking partnership with state and federal agencies.

**Welcome from Glen MacDonald,  
UCLA Institute of the Environment Director &  
Interim Director, La Kretz Center for California Conservation  
Science**

The La Kretz Center will work on research, educational and public outreach activities related to preserving California's unique environments and biodiversity. We plan for it to serve as a model for integrated conservation for the world's rapidly growing urban-wildland interfaces. It will be directed and managed as a Center of the UCLA Institute of the Environment and will work to bring a broad range of scholars and students from all divisions of UCLA together to assist in conservation science efforts in the Santa Monica Mountains and California in general, and to identify the research and educational opportunities available from

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outside the university. The Institute of the Environment will work closely with the [Stunt Ranch UC NR](#) and UCLA Life Sciences in planning Center activities. In an unique partnership with the [National Park Service](#), [California State Parks](#) and [Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority](#), the La Kretz Center Director and staff will be housed initially in the National Park headquarters in Thousand Oaks with additional space and staff support at the UCLA Institute of the Environment facilities on campus. We hope to hold many activities, including public lectures, at the King Gillette Ranch facilities managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.

**- to tackle these problems."**

The La Kretz Center represents a ground breaking initiative in meeting conservation needs in a rapid and synergistic manner. Meeting today's environmental challenges requires real-time management and in partnership with National Parks, State Parks and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, UCLA scientists and students will be in the field, working directly with conservation managers. Through the operations of the La Kretz Center we will offer real-time conservation science to managing resources in the Santa Monica Mountains and the adjacent region. Aside from conservation science goals, the La Kretz Center will develop undergraduate and graduate educational activities in conservation. We also hope to develop a high school academy on conservation. The La Kretz Center will become a visible and important component in training the next generation of conservation leaders. In addition, the Center will produce a lively program of workshops, seminars and symposia – not just for the conservation professionals and scholars, but for the general public. A key component of conservation success is an informed and engaged public. The La Kretz Center is dedicated to getting its message out to not just a global audience of scholars and professionals, but to the people of California at large. I would like to share some of our partners' thoughts on this exciting new initiative.

UCLA Life Sciences Dean Victoria Sork – “The La Kretz Center is groundbreaking in creating a new model for conservation and expanding UCLA’s role in Los Angeles. By locating the center with our partners in National Park Service, California State Parks, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the center offers a valuable resource to the UCLA environmental scientists across the UCLA campus that will facilitate research ranging from ecology, geography, atmospheric sciences to urban planning and environmental law.”

UCLA Distinguished Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Faculty Member of the Institute of the Environment Phil Rundel - “The Santa Monica Mountains provide extensive pristine landscapes of chaparral shrublands, oak and riparian woodlands, and coastal sage scrub that are exemplary of the diversity that has made California one of the world's designated ‘hotspots’ for biodiversity, The La Kretz Center is structured to promote a unique collaboration between UCLA researchers and agency staff that will encourage and coordinate scientific research that informs and supports environmental management and the conservation of our unique biodiversity in California, additionally, the center will enhance opportunities for student research in conservation science and environmental outreach programs to the public.”

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Superintendent Woody Smeck - “This will offer an unprecedented opportunity for National Park Service scientists to work alongside leading UCLA researchers. By working together, we will gain new insights into the best scientific land management practices for conserving this region’s delicate natural resources. The National Park Service looks forward to working not only with UCLA faculty, but also the many students who want to explore their passion for science and our natural world. We hope that many of them will be inspired to

continue pursuing pressing resource management questions well beyond graduation, both in the Santa Monica Mountains and other unique and treasured places in Southern California.”



For me - the Santa Monica Mountains and Southern California in general, represent the interface between the urban environment and the wild-land environment. Slightly more than 50 percent of the world’s population live in cities today; by 2050, that figure will rise to 70 percent. This is the natural environment that most urban dwellers see, and this is the one that is experiencing the most immediate impact from human activity. We owe it to that 50-70 percent of the world’s population to do our best to manage that urban interface in terms of the quality of the air and water, preservation of wildlife, biodiversity, the aesthetics of those environments, the ecological functioning of those environments (such as fires and landslides), the interface between the land and the ocean, and providing recreational activities. The La Kretz Center will address many of these issues. We have the resources at UCLA to make a real difference. We will bring UCLA science resources to bear on the basic problems confronting conservation in California, and train UCLA students — the next generation of conservation scientists — to tackle these problems. The efforts of the La Kretz Center will further bring UCLA to the people of Los Angeles and California.

As Dean Sork has said – “We are all extremely grateful to Morton La Kretz for not only his generosity, but also his visionary philanthropy and his deep commitment to enhancing the environment in Los Angeles. This center bearing his name will be a great asset to not only to UCLA, but to Los Angeles, Southern California, and beyond.”

Please visit these pages for updates and events as this exciting initiative gets underway!

Glen M. MacDonald  
UC Presidential Chair and Director

### **Mission**

The La Kretz Center for California Conservation Science will promote cross-disciplinary scientific research and educational activities that inform and support environmental management and public education with the goal of preserving California's exceptional biodiversity and unique ecosystems and to provide a model of university and inter-

agency cooperation for meeting the conservation and management challenges of the world's growing urban-wildland interface.

The La Kretz Center will conduct research, teaching programs and public outreach in partnership with the National Parks, State Parks and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. It will offer public workshops, lectures and conferences to share conservation lessons learned. The center will emphasize conservation science issues affecting the Santa Monica Mountains and the adjacent region, including the Los Angeles River Basin and Malibu.

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