



AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy To Receive National Planning Award**

**Washington, D.C.** – Having preserved thousands of acres of parkland and improved more than 100 public recreational facilities throughout Southern California, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has ensured that future generations will be able to experience, explore and find sanctuary in the mountains and natural areas that enhance the region's quality of life. Through strategic partnerships and years of behind-the-scenes efforts, this group has been able to advance the concepts of smart growth, infill development and clustering to preserve land and achieve density.

For these efforts, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is the 2005 recipient of the American Planning Association's (APA) most prestigious honor, the Daniel Burnham Award. The award is given to an individual or organization whose efforts have contributed to the elevation of planning principles, greater awareness of the value of planning, and an improved quality of life in one or more communities.

The Conservancy will be recognized at APA's National Planning Conference during a luncheon ceremony March 22 at the Moscone West convention center in San Francisco. In addition, a special 30-minute video about all of APA's 2005 National Planning Awards recipients will be shown at the luncheon. Accomplishments of the awardees also will be highlighted in the March 2005 issue of *Planning* magazine.

"The Conservancy's track record is commendable," says Bruce Knight, FAICP, co-chair of the APA Awards Committee. "The group has been able to leverage resources and purchase tracts of land, both large and small, that otherwise would have been sold for development."

Since it was established by the California Legislature in 1980, the Conservancy has preserved more than 55,000 acres of parkland across the Santa Monica Mountains, the Simi Hills, the Verdugo Mountains and portions of the Santa Susana and San Gabriel Mountains. The organization also has given grants to nonprofit groups for educational and interpretational programs that have served hundreds of thousands of children and other park visitors.

These accomplishments have not been easy given that the Conservancy has found itself working in highly-charged, political conditions involving the many jurisdictions located in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area.

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“The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy serves as a model for interagency cooperation and for the reconciliation of environmental, development and political goals,” says Awards Committee Co-Chair Carol Rhea, AICP.

Almost every parkland acquisition by the Conservancy tells a story of citizen involvement, community commitment and government cooperation. Partnerships are key to the Conservancy’s success. The group utilizes a strategic planning process that includes substantial community participation and input. It continually updates its projects and priorities to reflect the changing dynamics of the region.

The APA National Awards for Planning are part of a proud tradition established more than 50 years ago. The awards program, which recognizes outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives, public education efforts and individuals for their leadership on planning issues, attracted more than 130 entries nationwide this year.

*The American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the art, science and profession of good planning -- physical, economic and social -- at the local, regional, state, and national levels. APA encourages planning that contributes to public well-being by developing communities and environments that more effectively meet the needs of all people. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Ill. For more information, visit its website at [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org).*