



Cuyamaca Rancho State Park General Plan

Initial Public Outreach Summary
March 2013

California State Parks
Southern Service Center
2797 Truxtun Road
San Diego, CA 92106



Table of Contents

Introduction

- Context Map
- About Park
- Report Purpose
- Project Summary/Organization

Public Outreach

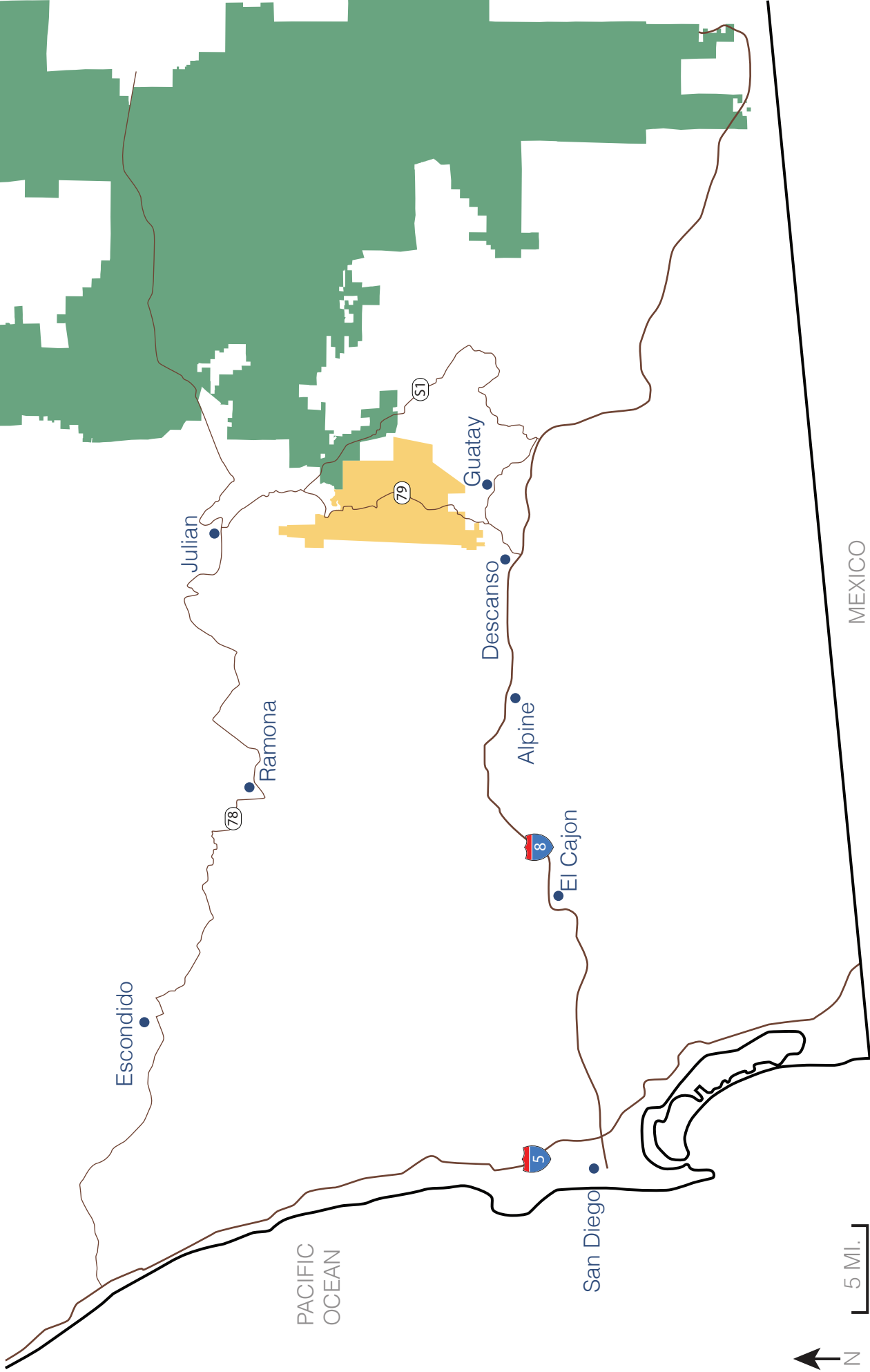
- Timeline
- Public Outreach Methods
- Focus Topics

Public Responses

- Main Activities and Desires
- Favorite Peaks
- Favorite Places
- Favorite Paths
- Major Themes

Additional Resources

- Planning and Policy Hierarchy
- Park Statistics



-  Cuyamaca Rancho State Park
-  Anza Borrego Desert State Park

Context Map

*Note: Park Boundaries are Approximate

Introduction

Cuyamaca Rancho State Park (CRSP), located 50 miles East of San Diego and 15 miles South of the quaint historic town of Julian, is a popular destination for hikers, mountain bikers, as well as horseback riders. Within the 24, 700 acres are over 100 miles of riding and hiking trails through meadows, mountains, and conifer forests broken up by streams and waterfalls. Over half the park's acreage is designated as state wilderness. From the top of Cuyamaca Peak, the second highest point in San Diego County at 6,512 feet, visitors can view Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to the East or the Pacific Ocean to the West. In 2003, over 90% of CRSP was burned in the Cedar Fire, damaging or destroying several facilities in the process.



View West from Stonewall Peak Trail

Inventory

~Existing Conditions and Issues

Purpose and Vision

~Primary Intent of the Park
~Broad Expectations for the Park

Management Zones

~Define Areas by Management Strategies, Use and Facilities

Goals and Guidelines

~Overall Direction of Future Management
~General Parameters for Goal Achievement

California State Parks began the General Planning process for CRSP in June, 2012 to update the existing plan, adopted in 1986, in response to the changing conditions and issues arising over time, including newly acquired lands adjacent to CRSP in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, as well as the ever changing and regenerating environment after the 2003 fires.

A General Plan's purpose is to define the long term purpose, vision, use and management framework of a state park. This includes defining goals, guidelines and objectives for a park, but does not include outlining specific prescriptions and details of how the goals will be achieved. For an example, see the inset to the right.

This document summarizes the public input thus-far in regards to the CRSP General Plan, which will help guide the formulation of the General Plan proposals.



First Public Meeting

GENERAL PLAN:

What (Type)
Why (Purpose)
Where (General zones, Areas)

NOT GENERAL PLAN:

How (Methods, Design)
When (Time, Schedule)
Where (Specific Sites)
What (Specific Size + Shape)

Public Outreach

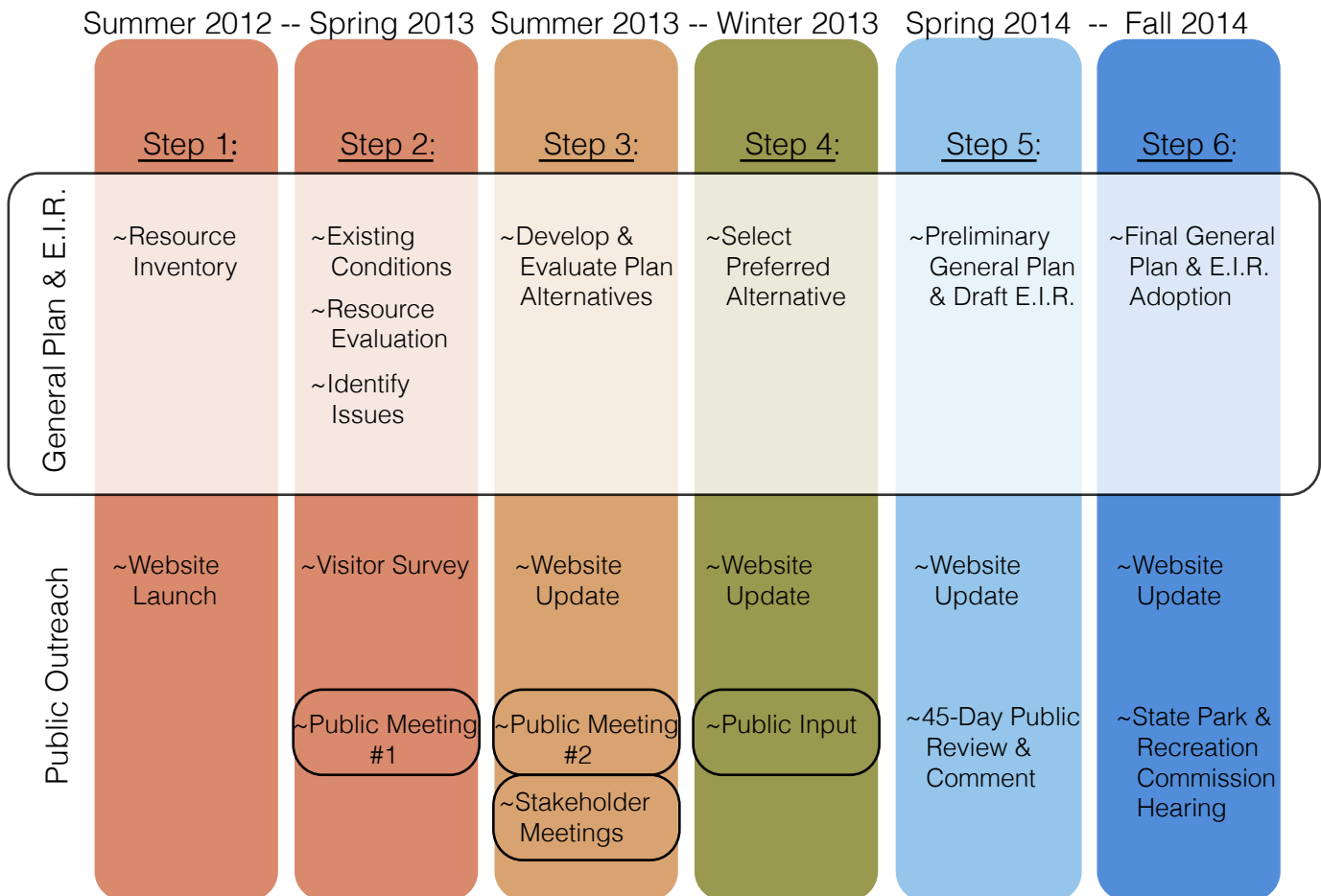
The purpose of the public outreach portion of the General Plan is to allow all those who have a vested interest in the use and development of CRSP to make their opinions heard through multiple avenues. Some of the interested parties include park users, local Native American tribes, local residents, volunteers, park rangers and staff.

Several methods of input are being provided for use, including a Visitor Survey, whose results are summarized in this document, public meetings, stakeholder meetings and a review and comment period once the preliminary General Plan is drafted. Suggestions and concerns raised in these public outreach sessions will aid in the decision-making process throughout the General Plan.

Some major themes brought up by park stakeholders are represented in the graphic below.



GENERAL PLAN PROCESS & TIMELINE SUMMARY

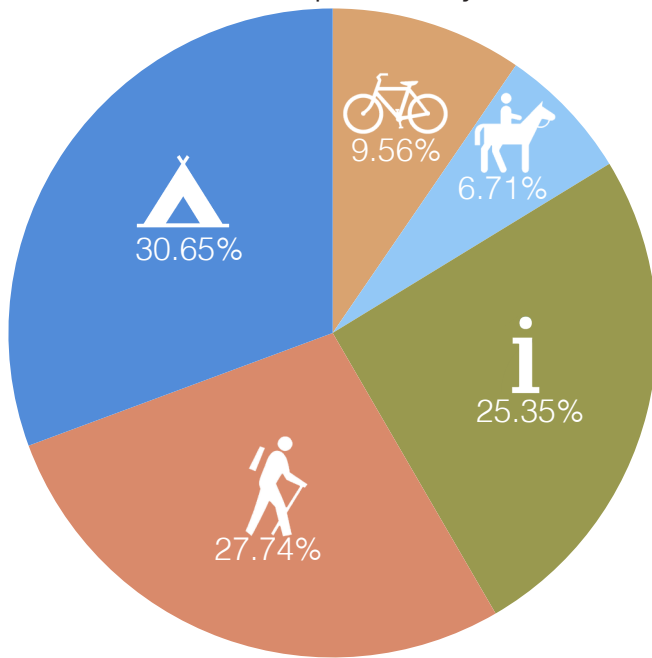


Public Responses

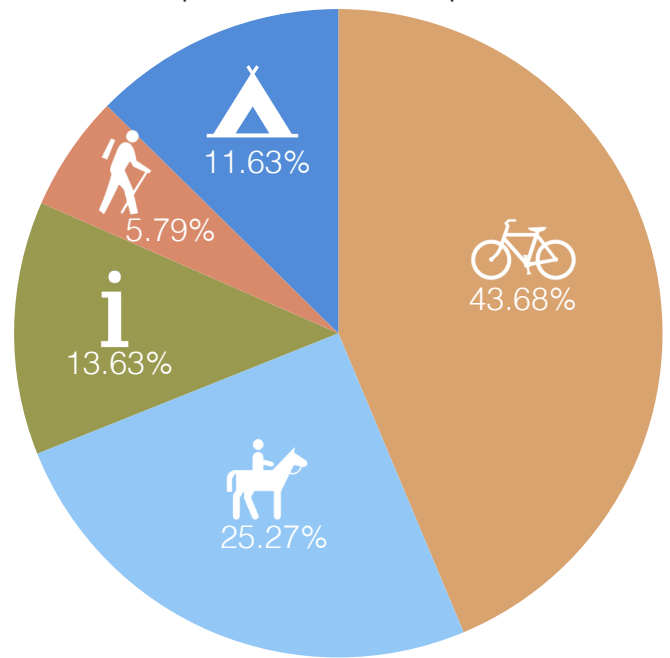
The feedback obtained thus-far suggests the primary activities occurring at the park are nature enjoyment/observation, hiking, camping in some form, horseback riding and mountain biking. The ratio between each user group was obtained by tallying the number of participants for each activity according to the questions asked at the public meeting and the online visitor survey. The visitor survey was offered from September 7th to November 7th, 2012, and 1,457 responses were received. This is not a representative sample of all park visitors. This is a tally from the data received from the Visitor Survey and the first public meeting.

Based on the survey and public meeting responses, the primary areas of interest for improvements are biking and equestrian facilities. It appears that while hiking is one of the most popular activities at the park, the facilities are seen as adequate, resulting in a small number of improvement requests. Most of the interpretive and educational improvements mentioned were increased signage for natural and cultural resources as well as informational native plant signage to educate users on the current regrowth of the forest areas post 2003.

User Groups Surveyed



Improvements Requested



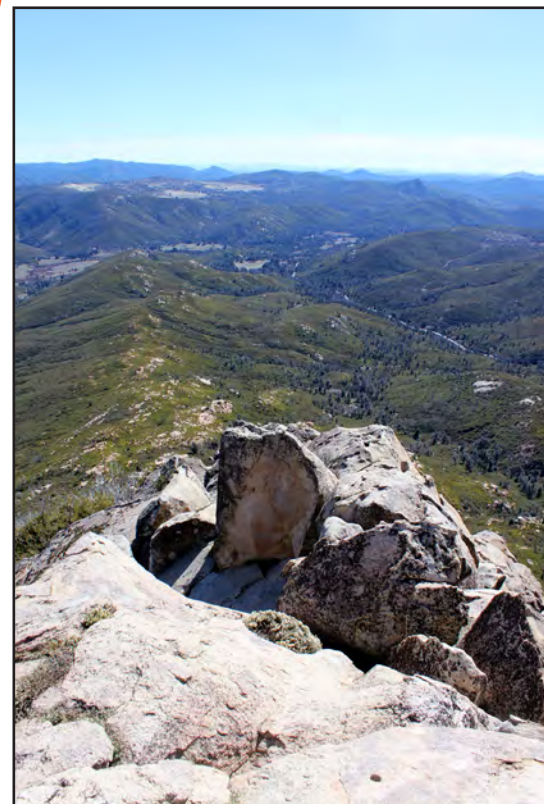
The quantity of improvements requested by each user group is almost opposite to the ratio of users. This could imply that those using the park now for hiking, camping and nature activities (such as photography or nature walks) find the facilities regarding those activities adequate for their current needs. The increased number of requests for equestrian facilities is partially due to many requests for another northern horse camp to replace Los Caballos which was destroyed in the 2003 fires. The large amount of biking improvements requested may be due to an increase in participants locally and nationwide.

Favorite Peaks

This map shows the peaks within the park. The size of the icon represents the general popularity and amount of use each gets, with the largest icon, Stonewall Peak, being the most popular with visitors resulting in heavy usage. Both Stonewall Peak and Oakzanita Peak are very popular, most likely because of their close proximity to the highway and convenient parking areas. Cuyamaca Peak's popularity most likely stems from its easy access by Lookout Fire Road, its status as the 2nd highest peak in San Diego County, and its spectacular views.



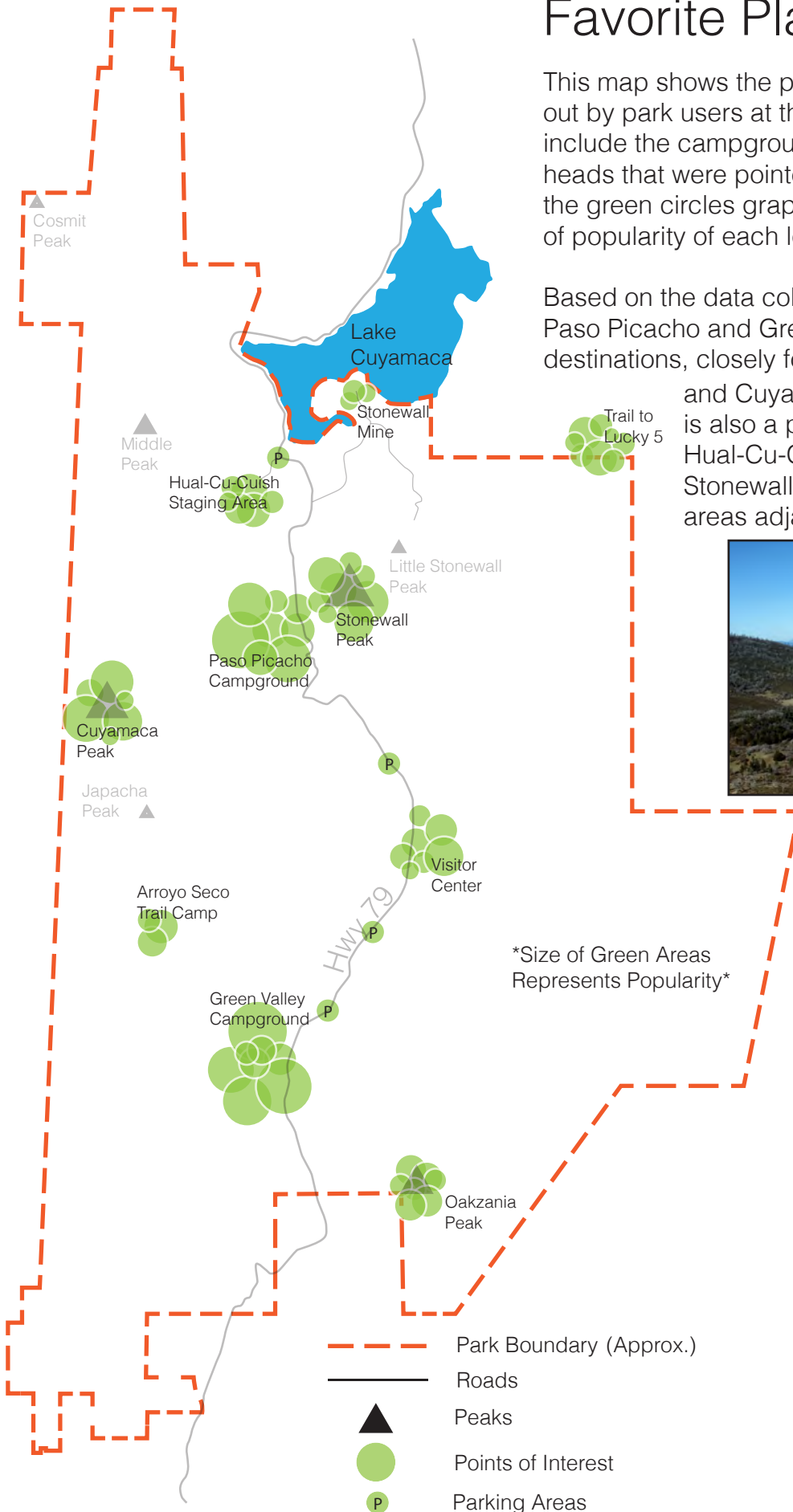
Above: Stonewall Peak
Below: Looking Southeast from Stonewall Peak



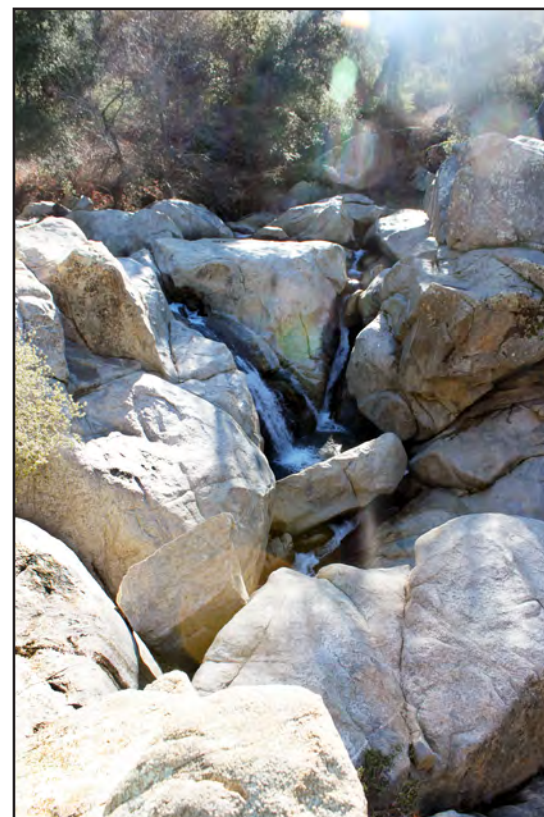
Favorite Places

This map shows the primary destinations pointed out by park users at the first public meeting. They include the campgrounds, peaks, and primary trail heads that were pointed out. The area covered by the green circles graphically represents the degree of popularity of each location.

Based on the data collected, the campgrounds at Paso Picacho and Green Valley are the most popular destinations, closely followed by Stonewall Peak and Cuyamaca Peak. The Visitor Center is also a primary destination, as is the Hual-Cu-Cuish equestrian Staging Area, Stonewall Mine and day use parking areas adjacent to state Route 79.



Above: View from Stonewall Peak
Below: Green Valley Falls



Size of Green Areas Represents Popularity

- Park Boundary (Approx.)
- Roads
- Peaks
- Points of Interest
- P Parking Areas

Favorite Trails

This map shows some of the most popular trails used by visitors according to public input. They include 8 fire roads, 2 of which are used only by bikes and hikers. There are 9 horses-and-hiking only trail sections as well. The heavily used trails connect the popular places, as would be expected. Not all of the park's trails are shown on this map.



Above: Stonewall Peak Trail
Below: Falls Trail



Major Themes

Several primary themes were re-occurring throughout the initial public outreach efforts. These themes range from things the users are satisfied with and do not want to see changed, additional facilities and services they would like to see, to changes they'd like implemented. Each of these themes are summarized in the following pages. Their order is arbitrary and does not show priority in any way.



Southern Park Entrance Sign



Green Valley Falls

“PEACEFUL RETREAT”

One of the aspects of the park that was mentioned multiple times was its service as a peaceful escape from the city. With the majority of the park in wilderness, several people voiced their appreciation for the natural, wild, and quiet feeling of the park, allowing them to feel immersed in the local natural setting.

ACCESSIBILITY

Closely related to the aforementioned “retreat” aspect of the park is its close proximity to San Diego and surrounding towns, making it the perfect location for a day trip. There were many notes regarding the fees for parking, requesting they either be eliminated, reduced or have a kiosk for payment by credit card.

Regarding handicapped accessibility, several people mentioned their concern regarding a lack of accessible trails and wished to see more installed or made accessible.

Also, the accessibility of the campsites at Green Valley for larger horse rigs was a concern. The unevenness and size of sites was mentioned multiple times.



Green Valley Equestrian Campground



Park and Cuyamaca Outdoor School Sign

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Many participants mentioned their appreciation of the park serving as a place for children to learn about the outdoors and wanted to see more opportunities for getting youths involved in nature. Several mentioned campfire activities, nature walks, and junior rangers and expressed a desire for more of them.

SUPPORT FOR MULTIPLE RECREATION TYPES

Many visitors expressed their appreciation of the trail availability and condition, especially since it was found that most people partake in multiple different types of recreation throughout the park. There was a desire for more multi-use trails throughout the park for everyone to use, as well as multiple difficulty levels for the trails.



Arroyo Seco Fire Road

CONNECTIVITY

Relating to the trail system, there were several suggestions to increase connectivity throughout the park, thus making the park's diverse areas more accessible and connected.

These suggestions were typical for trail connections to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, William Heise County Park, and especially a bike accessible path from the South end of the park to the central trails to eliminate the need to ride on the highway.



Paso Picacho Loop Trail

SAFETY

With the request for more multi-use trails came the concern about trail safety. Several users expressed concern regarding sharing the trails with multiple recreation types and suggested safe mountain biking clinics as well as horseback volunteer training in order to insure the safety of all those using the park.



Former Cal Fire Station

CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

It is well known that the park is filled with unique and delicate cultural and natural resources. It is these resources that make the park so attractive and popular with people today. The methods taken to protect these resources is of concern for users.

Many people dislike having these resource areas closed to public use and would rather see them have limited public access with more informational panels educating users, resulting in both protection and recreational use. Others expressed their longing for all preserved areas to be fully open to public use.

On the other hand, many people stated that the primary mission of the park was to conserve the native habitat and expressed concern that the natural environment was not being protected enough, requesting that more protective measures be placed.



Stonewall Mine Interpretive Panel



Interpretive Panel at Stonewall Peak Trail

INCREASE EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

Going hand-in-hand with the protection of cultural and natural areas was the frequent request for more informational resources. Users requested that more interpretive signs be placed around the park with native plant, animal and historic information on them.

Visitors also requested more interpretive programs be offered to the public, such as campfire programs, junior rangers, nature walks, etc.

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

While users are generally content with the condition of the existing facilities, there were many requests for additional facilities for all recreation types, including, but not limited to, a northern horse camp, horse staging areas, bike trails, bike maintenance stations, snow play areas, camping near Lake Cuyamaca, trail benches/rest stops and multi-use trails.



Restroom/Shower Building under construction at Green Valley Equestrian Camp

Conclusion



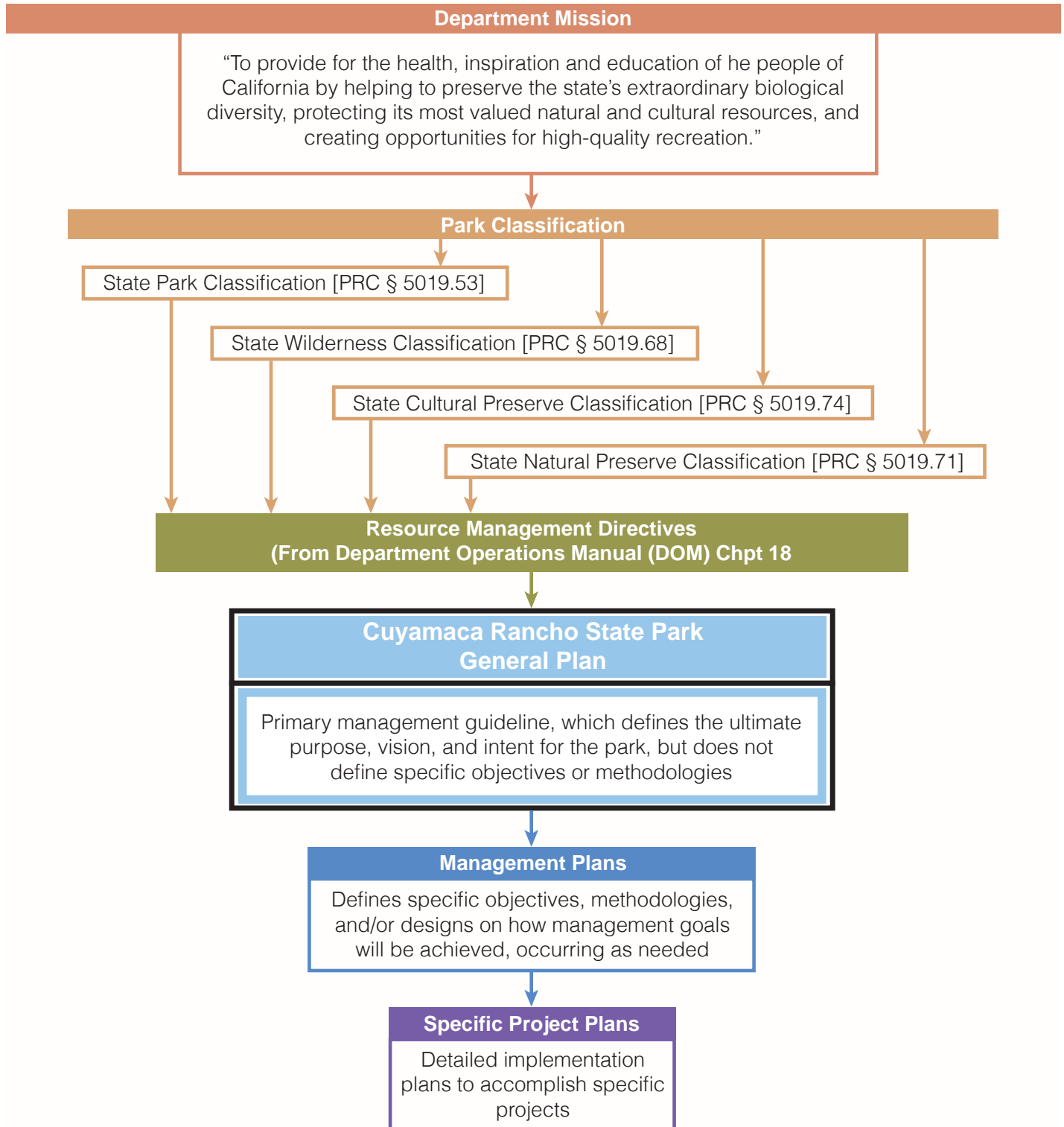
The general plan process for Cuyamaca Rancho State Park will culminate in June 2014. Throughout this process, public input, both verbal and written, will have a positive influence on general plan proposals.

Overall, park users are generally in favor of current recreational opportunities, facilities, and management, with minor improvements needed in specific areas, including, but not limited to, new horse riding facilities, mountain biking trails, educational and informational opportunities, and camping availability. The favorite trails and places mentioned most often are generally consistent with what was previously thought. There were requests for more trail connectivity both within the park and with resources adjacent to the park, such as Anza Borrego Desert State Park and Cuyamaca Lake. In general, users enjoy the park's extensive trail system, its accessibility and close proximity to San Diego, its educational opportunities, and its natural setting.

The General Plan Team for the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park expresses their sincere gratitude to all of the public stakeholders, visitors, and user groups who have contributed valuable ideas, concerns, and impressions about the park. Their input has and will continue to be vital as California State Parks manages the park and visitors come to enjoy it into the 21st century.

Planning and Policy Hierarchy

Following is a Hierarchy of mandates that directs management and use of Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.



Cuyamaca Rancho State Park General Plan Park Information and Statistics



Address: Cuyamaca Rancho State Park
13652 Highway 79
Julian, CA 92036
(760) 765-3020

Park Sector: Montane Sector

Park District: Colorado Desert District

Average Annual Park Attendance: 475,472 (1996 to 2011)
Average Annual Interpretive Program Attendance: 1,500 (2007 to 2012)
Cuyamaca Outdoor School Average Annual Student Attendance: 12,000

Supporting Organizations: Cuyamaca Rancho Foundation (CRF), Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association (CRSPIA), Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP): Mounted Assistance Unit, Mountain Bike Assistance Unit, Trails Maintenance Unit, Interpreters Assistance Unit, Camp Hosts

Average Annual Volunteer Hours Donated: 19,441 (2005 to 2001)

Current Public Events Held At Park: Earth Day, Equestrian Benefit Ride, Mountain Bike Benefit Ride.

Current Acreage: 24,738 (Wilderness: 13,073, Cultural Preserve 2,457, Natural Preserve 731)

Miles of Trails: 137.14 miles (42% are fire roads)

Trail Access Points: 20 (approx.)

Scenic Overlooks: 6 (at least)

Wildlife Species: 127 potentially occurring wildlife species (98 avian, 22 mammal, 4 reptile, 3 amphibian)

Special Status Wildlife: 2 avian, 8 mammal, 1 amphibian, 2 reptile, and 1 invertebrate species

Plant Species: Approximately 218 plant species

Special Status Plants: 22 plant species

Habitat Communities: 1 rare natural community

Archaeological Sites: More than 700 documented sites (over 600 of those are Native American; approximately 40% of park has been examined for archaeology)

Historic Resources: More than 125 historic sites (includes historic buildings and historic archaeological sites)

Mountain Peaks: 7: Cuyamaca Peak (6,512 ft.), Middle Peak (5,883 ft.), Japacha Peak (5,825 ft.), Stonewall Peak (5,730 ft.), Little Stonewall Peak (5,250 ft.), Oakzanita Peak (5,054 ft.), Cosmit Peak (4,575 ft.)

Rivers: 1: Sweetwater River

Creeks: 7: Azalea Creek, Boulder Creek, Little Stonewall Creek, Harper Creek, Japacha Creek, Juaquapin Creek, Descanso Creek,

Streams: 8: (at least)

Springs: 5: Azalea Spring, Deer Spring, Japacha Spring, Cold Spring, Dyar Spring

Watersheds (parts of): 2

Waterfalls: 1: (at least): Green Valley Falls

Named Rock Features: 1: Stonewall Peak

Soils: 19 series (USDA)

Facilities:

Family Campgrounds: 2: Paso Picacho Campground (85 sites) and Green Valley Campground (81 sites)

Equestrian Campgrounds: 1: Green Valley Equestrian Campground (14 sites)

Equestrian Group Campgrounds: 1: Los Vaqueros Equestrian Group Campground

Group Camps: 1: Paso Picacho Group Camp (currently closed)

Trail camps: 2: Arroyo Seco, Granite Springs

Cabins: 5: at Paso Picacho Campground

Visitor Centers: 1

Designated Picnic Areas: 4

Restrooms: 5

Restroom/

Shower Buildings: 8

Campfire Centers: 2

Sewage Dump Stations: 2

Day Use Parking Lots: 4 plus 9 locations along State Route 79

Equestrian Staging Areas: 3: Hual-Cu-Cuish, "Sweetwater" Day Use Parking Lot, Merigan Day Use Parking Lot

Note: All Data are approximate, for general reference only, and do not necessarily reflect definitive or final statistics.