

Castle Rock State Park

Newsletter #2

General Plan Newsletter

June 1997

Planning Workshop #2

June 25, 1997

7:00 PM - 9:30 PM

Multipurpose Room

Fisher Middle School

17000 Roberts Road, Los Gatos, CA

(located near Blossom Hill Road and Los Gatos Blvd.)

You are invited to attend the second planning workshop in preparation of a general plan for Castle Rock State Park. At this workshop, planners will present the various alternatives being considered for future park management and recreational use. We would like your thoughts and suggestions on the range of park possibilities, before we formulate a preferred plan.

(See page 3 for a Summary of Alternatives)

Our first planning workshop

was held October 1996 in Los Gatos. The purpose was to identify planning issues and public concerns about the park's management and use. About 40 people who attended expressed their interest, ranging from preserving wilderness values to increasing parking and access for multiple recreational use. Different organizations and user groups were represented, as well as property owners and nearby residents. A large number of people in attendance represented the mountain bike and rock climbing communities. During the workshop exercise, individuals were assigned to work-groups and asked to identify concerns, goals, and facility or program needs. *Continued on page 2 in the Summary of Planning Issues and Public Concerns.*

General Plan Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to provide general guidelines for management of the resources and development of park facilities, and establish broad guidelines for park operations and interpretation of resource values.

The General Plan will:

1. Identify the significant cultural, natural, recreational, and esthetic resource values of the park and provide guidelines for their protection and preservation;
2. Determine appropriate land use, park development, and visitor activities, and present guidelines for management and future development planning;
3. Determine the potential environmental impacts of the land uses and visitor activities promoted by the plan.

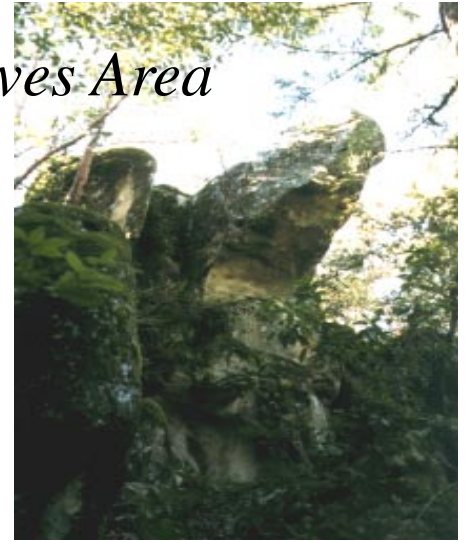
Throughout the general plan process, the public is a vital member of the planning team. With your participation, we can learn how this park should be improved to meet your needs and protect resource values. At our first planning workshop and through surveys of park users, many people expressed the importance of preserving wilderness characteristics and improving interpretation of resource values. People also want access to open space and recreation opportunities that complement activities available in other nearby parks.



Ridge top oak woodland community

Castle Rock State Park is mostly undeveloped and offers magnificent vistas and local views of great beauty. Much of it is wild, rugged and inaccessible and home to a variety of plants and animals. Existing trails are used for hiking, horseback riding, and access to popular rock climbing areas. Trail camps accommodate backpackers who are visiting or traveling through the park on the Saratoga Gap and the Skyline-to-the-Sea trails. Mountain bikes are popular on trails north of the park in the Saratoga Gap Open Space Preserve, but are not currently authorized on trails in Castle Rock State Park.

Lion Caves Area



Most of the hiking and rock climbing activity is concentrated in the vicinity of Goat Rock and Castle Rock, with trail access from the main parking lot off Highway 35. Sensitive resources in these areas are currently being damaged from overuse. Soil erosion, trampled vegetation, rock bolting, and moss removal have resulted in the loss of sensitive habitat and degraded the park's natural values.

trails which connect to other trails outside the park, such as the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail. Other suggestions included: preserve the hiking experience with larger network of hiking trails; improve horse trails, with loop trail system and trailer parking, and improve access trails to high use areas. Many hikers and equestrians feel that multiple-use of trails will become a problem with increasing demands.

Summary of Planning Issues and Public Concerns

Continued from page 1.

The following is a summary of problems, issues, and suggestions made by the public during our first planning workshop:

Manage Parking: Many park visitors feel that parking and restroom facilities are limited. Also, parking along Skyline Blvd. and Highway 9 can be hazardous to motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians due to high speed traffic. The overriding concern for improved facilities is that visitor parking and parking fee collection be better managed. Some suggested that the park should consider opening the area near the interpretive shelter for parking. Others feel that visitor parking should be dispersed to the west side of the park off Highway 9, to reduce impacts from concentrated overuse of Castle Rock area.

Provide Recreation Opportunities: There is strong interest among the climbing community in maintaining the availability of rock climbing areas in Castle Rock State Park. Several people at this meeting also felt it important to recognize the value of including mountain bikes in the outdoor experience. Suggestions were to make bike access available to some trails, in particular,

Protect Resource Values: It is recognized by some people that ecological damage is occurring due to climbing activities around and on the rock formations. Volunteer trails go into sensitive areas and create adverse impacts on plant and wildlife habitats. Comments were that we need a climbing management plan to preserve access and avoid further degradation of park resources. Also, the Department should prepare resource management plans for vegetation and wildlife preservation, fire management, and removal of feral pigs and exotic plants. The public suggested that State Parks purchase the San Lorenzo Water District property at the park's southern boundary, as well as other adjacent lands from willing sellers located within the Upper San Lorenzo River watershed.

Preserve Wilderness Character: Frequent visitors believe that Castle Rock State Park should be protected from over-development and uncontrollable use. They said that development of facilities should be consistent with limiting the number of visitors at levels consistent with wilderness values. Only essential operations and visitor support facilities should be provided and located at the perimeter of the park. Education and interpretive programs are needed to ensure that visitors are aware of the history and the delicate nature of the naturally occurring flora and fauna.

Reduce Impacts & Disturbances: Visitors expressed their displeasure with the gun noise from the Los Altos Rod and Gun Club, located adjacent to the park. They feel gun noise impacts the quality of visitor experience. The public also expressed concern for gun club debris and their potential negative affect on park resources. The visiting public indicated they would like to see the gun club moved.

Provide Adequate Staffing: Many people have expressed concern that future development programs need to include funding for operations support.

Planning Issues

After studying resource sensitivities and visitor use, the planning team has identified several park issues that need to be addressed in the General Plan. The General Plan will provide direction and guidelines for future development or management decisions related to the level of use and the need for resource protection measures.

Major Planning Questions

1. How can we manage rock climbing activities and minimize resource damage to "Tafoni" rock formations, special plants, and wildlife?
2. How can we provide adequate visitor parking and trailhead access and not perpetuate the overuse of the Goat Rock and Castle Rock areas?
3. How can we accommodate different types of recreation activities that may conflict with each other, or adversely impact resource values?
4. How can we provide basic services and recreation opportunities, while preserving the wilderness characteristics of the park?
5. How can we improve visitor orientation to surrounding areas and their understanding of the natural and cultural sensitivities of the park?
6. How can we best manage and preserve sensitive wildlife habitat and plant communities within the San Lorenzo and Kings Creek watersheds? and,
7. How can we establish park management policies and land uses that are consistent and compatible with adjoining public and private lands?

Planning Alternatives

The following is an overview of the plan alternatives and range of considerations the planning team will present and discuss at the planning workshop:

A. Proposed Natural Preserves This proposal includes possible subclassification of significant natural areas identified within the park. Alternatives range from designation of two smaller areas (Lion caves and Kings Creek Canyon) to one large natural preserve that incorporates significant portions of both Kings Creek and Upper San Lorenzo River watersheds.

B. Saratoga Gap Visitor Services This proposal includes two main alternatives: a multi-agency visitor center, with exhibits, parking, information and sales; and a second alternative that would utilize surplus Caltrans property to provide a park office, food concession, restrooms, and parking. Both concepts, or combination, are being explored by the planning team.

C. Partridge Farm A range of preservation and development alternatives are being considered for the Partridge Farm area, that include: restoration of natural area with existing uses; extended use for overflow parking and special use by permits; low density walk-in campsites with parking and restrooms; or medium density traditional campground development.

D. Rock Climbing Proposals for rock climbing include a combination of continued climbing along Castle Ridge and closure of the Lion Caves and Kings Creek Canyon areas that are being proposed as natural preserves; climbing in remote areas (underworld) with improved trail access; preparation of a climbing management plan, organizing volunteers, and regulating use based on monitoring of resource impacts.

E. Trail System Alternatives to the existing trail system are being explored to enhance recreation opportunities and park experience. The range of possibilities include: new trails to create a loop-trail system for hiking and equestrian use; exclusion of mountain bikes on existing trails, or limited use on trail routes that would not degrade resource values; upgrading trailhead parking in locations off Highway 9; and restoring the primitive nature of trail camps by removing non-significant park structures.

Where we are in the planning process

Visitor Survey

Many of you are aware that the California Department of Parks and Recreation is conducting a survey of visitors to Castle Rock State Park to better understand who visits this park and what activities visitors most enjoy doing. Most importantly, we want to know what services, facilities, or programs visitors feel are needed to protect resources and also provide an enjoyable recreational experience.

During 1996 - 97, 1500 surveys have been handed out at the park. To date, we received 430 survey questionnaires completed by park visitors. These surveys are being tabulated and their results will be provided at the upcoming planning workshop.

- Data Gathering
- Identify Issues & Concerns
- Prepare Alternatives
- Develop Preferred Plan (draft)
- Public Review & Comment (CEQA)
- Park Commission Approval

Castle Rock Advisory Committee

An advisory committee from the local community was established at the beginning of our planning effort to advise the park on local concerns. For information, you may contact Jan Anderson, Park Superintendent at (408) 429-2850, or write to the committee: Attention Stu Langdoc, 17680 Bruce Ave., Monte Sereno, CA 95030.

Mission Statement

The Mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's most extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

If you haven't already done so, pick up a survey from the ranger during your next visit to the park.



We would like to hear from you!

For more information:

If you are not currently on our mailing list, and would like to receive the newsletter and notice about future planning actions, please give us a call, or write to the address below:



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS
Dave Keck, Northern Service Center
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
(916) 322-2997

Visit the State Parks Web Page at
<http://www.ceres.ca.gov/dpr/>