



FEBRUARY 2000

NEWSLETTER #6

STATE PARK'S *Director, Rusty Areias* HOLDS PUBLIC MEETING

On September 20th at Fisher Middle School in Los Gatos, State Parks held their fifth public meeting on the general plan for Castle Rock State Park. Director Rusty Areias called for this meeting to obtain additional input on park related planning issues. State Park personnel in attendance, were Director Areias, Chief Deputy Director Mary Wright, Santa Cruz District Superintendent Dave Vincent, Santa Cruz Mtns. Sector Supervisor Jan Anderson, and Project Manager Dave Keck, as well as other members of the planning team.

The public's interest was represented by 60 people, which included Santa Cruz Supervisor Jeff Almquist and a representative from Assemblyman Keeley's office. Most of the people who attended have participated throughout the 4-year planning process, either by attending the citizens advisory committee meetings, planning workshops, or on field trips with resource specialists and members of the State Park Planning Team. This planning process has created opportunities for a frequent exchange of ideas and information on a wide-range of issues affecting Castle Rock State Park and surrounding open space lands.

Director Areias opened the meeting by stating its purpose, which was to aid the Department in finalizing the Preliminary General Plan. The Director wanted to hear from all sides of the issues before making decisions on such things as park classification, Partridge Farm development, and dispersed parking and access. Dave Keck, project manager, made a presentation of the preliminary general plan, summarizing the significant resource values and proposed guidelines for long-term preservation, management, and public use. Jan Anderson, Park Superintendent, described the current projects and programs underway at the park and more detailed resource studies and management plans that the local district is working on. For example, a Climbing Management Plan is being prepared to guide future low-impact climbing in the park. A trail committee was formed to evaluate existing trails, establish criteria for new trails, and make recommendations for future trail connections and appropriate use.

**Please see page 9
for information regarding the
State Park and Rec. Commission
Public Hearing
March 8, 2000**

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following represents a summary of public comments from each individual speaker at the September public meeting:

Speaker 1 Goal to restore wilderness character

- Desire for education facilities
- Manage for Wilderness designation
- Monitor improved conditions and report on progress
- Goal to restore wilderness character
- Centralize parking concept is valid for management control
- Walk-in campground is not compatible with wilderness objectives
- Campground would change the park's character
- Acquire Rod & Gun Club should be the goal of the Commission & DPR
- Noise impacts wilderness experience
- Castle Rock should remain different than other traditional State Parks

Speaker 2 Concerned for access and parking problems along Highways 9 and 35.

- Don't go back to unsupervised parking and access along highways
- Impacts property owners – liability to handle problems
- Partridge Farm is likely place for centralized parking
- Doesn't matter what you call it (Natural Preserve or wilderness), just take care of it!

Speaker 3 Castle Rock is prime wilderness area

- Don't develop Partridge Farm. Need sufficient buffer around wilderness
- Disperse access, but keep control of parking
- Few managed trailheads with improved parking
- Climbing will always impact Castle Rock Ridge. Do not add to the problems with more development at Partridge Farm

Speaker 4 Support Partridge Farm for day-use & camping.

- Primitive trail camps not conducive for three-day outing for children (Girl Scout Group). Would support camping at Partridge Farm.

Speaker 5 Open Partridge Farm to public use as originally intended.

- Interpretive Shelter designed by noted Architect, exhibits by noted artist, and funded by Sempervirens Fund. Shelter should be more accessible for public use.

- Early studies did not find rare & endangered plants at Partridge Farm.
- Sempervirens Fund will fund addition studies for Goat Rock that will provide a basis for evaluating impacts when Partridge is opened to the public.

Speaker 6 Support for General Plan as is.

- Partridge Farm is already developed.
- Has good access.
- We can't create wilderness. Natural Preserve is as close as we can get.
- As a state park, we should plan for protection and use.

Speaker 7 General Plan recognizes "Dark Sky" as resource.

- Plan needs more reference to light protection & minimize light pollution.
- Shield outdoor lights.
- More guidelines needed on protecting Dark Sky resource.

Speaker 8 Support for Plan: Needs active management and preservation

- However, I do not support a Natural Preserve where people are not allowed to roam (as is the case in other wilderness areas).

Speaker 9 Parking dispersal will not work.

- Need central entrance for Ranger contact.
- Need more Ranger staffing; build this into the State's planning process.
- Partridge is fragile, but is the best alternative presented.
- Proposed camping not needed.

Speaker 10 Encourage adoption of Park Plan.

- Want Parks to consider limited access for mountain bikes.

Speaker 11 Support for General Plan without campground

- Supports proposed general plan, but does not think there is enough justification for proposed walk-in camping at Partridge Farm.

Speaker 12 Dark Sky Resource needs more emphasis in General Plan.

- Light pollution is impacting other parks. State Parks should work toward protecting all parks and preserving the Dark Sky resource.

Speaker 13 Object to both Gun Clubs.

- Noise is obscene.
- Safety issue: Bullets fly by people
- Concerned for lead contamination of creeks (current use produces 20-30 lbs. Lead per day) Don't know what impact this is having on the park's resources downslope.

Speaker 14 R.O.M.P. supports the General Plan.

- Good platform for moving forward with a balance for protection & use.
- Want regional trail connections: We need to have the bicycles off Hwy. 9.

Speaker 15 Representing interests in Astronomy.

- Telescopes are large and require vehicle access to transport to site.
- Organized groups want to use Partridge Farm for viewing dark skies.
- Protect Dark Sky from light pollution. Set up scopes in parking lots
- Separate from highway lights and campground lights (Gas lamps should not be allowed).

Speaker 16 Provide park resource for people.

- Natural Preserve limits uses to trails only - mistake.
- Need expansive trail system for access to park areas.
- Parking should provide for public recreation.

Speaker 17 Do not over-develop Partridge

- Inadequate staffing to manage use against vandalism & garbage.
- Camping proposals are not a good idea.
- Provide for interpretation.

Speaker 18 Concern for managing access & use of trailheads

- Increased use will increase access problems at trailheads.
- Need staffing to police these use areas.

Speaker 19 Support for Plan. No need to disperse parking

- Adequate parking exists along Highway 9 for intended use.
- Most use on ridge is due to the features that visitors want to see.

Speaker 20 Return to wilderness.

- No development at Partridge Farm.
- Park will become wilderness if managed with this objective.
- Partridge Farm development would change the park and the quality of the wilderness (once you start development it will not stop). Other solutions need to be explored.
- Need a place for protecting wildlife.
- DPR mission is for people and resources: Preserving biological diversity, protecting most valued resources, and creating opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation. Wilderness is a high-quality experience and fits with DPR's mission - should be applied to Castle Rock.

Speaker 21 State Park classification will support preservation objectives

- Sempervirens Fund supports the General Plan.
- Wilderness classification is not appropriate.
- Walk-in campsites are appropriate.
- Dispersed parking is unmanageable
- Centralized facilities do work, if limited.

Speaker 22 Work toward wilderness designation

- Wilderness designation has educational value for the public.
- Makes area accessible to explore. Could be expanded beyond Castle Rock.
- Development will change the park. Big Basin is an example of how areas have changed.
- New trails can have impact on native plants.
- Acquire other lands for diversity in recreational areas.

Speaker 23 Residents along Skyline Blvd have concerns for safety

- Parking should be centralized.
- Increased access requires more staffing.
- Roadside parking on Highways 35 & 9 are dangerous.

Speaker 24 Hiker supports the General Plan.

- Castle Rock is not a wilderness - Highways and Gun Club intrusions.
- Camping will serve some needs, but not all would use it.

Speaker 25 Supports access for people with disabilities

- In California 1 out of 5 have a disability.
- Glad to see access included in the General Plan.
- Partridge Farm has good access for people with all types of disabilities.
- Plan provides camping opportunities and trail access.
- Plan would protect natural values

Speaker 26 Opposed to dispersed parking.

- Supports centralized parking. Oppose "Alternative Plan" proposal for dispersed parking.
- Put the Rangers in the park.
- Staffing & manageability major concerns.
- State Park Bond funding usually results in more land acquisition, fewer new services or additional staffing, and an overall decline in quality.
- Need active resource management, and a plan that improves staff's ability to manage use.
- Reduce conflicting agency jurisdictions.

Speaker 27 Support General Plan - Protection is there for wildlife.

- Proposed Campground: 20 walk-in sites not a problem.
- Castle rock is not a wilderness - will never become one.
- Plan should deal with problems and damage from "Wild Pigs."

Speaker 28 There are legal problems with the plan

- Violation of CEQA. No ecological superior alternative presented.
- Castle Rock location is at a critical juncture in Santa Cruz Mountains.
- State Parks owns and manages a great deal of land in the region, with many recreational opportunities and responsibility to manage resources.
- Could have other sensitive species in the park – not yet located.
- Wilderness is legal designation and appropriate for Castle Rock.
- Re-write the General Plan.
- Expand Natural Preserve and classify as Wilderness
- Natural Preserve leaves rest of the park for development
- Natural Preserve bisects important ecological resources.
- Will impact Black Oak Woodland
- Speaker believes that this General Plan is about "developing" the park.

Speaker 29 Additional staffing needed to manage park use

- Access problems with dispersed parking and use
- Wild Pigs causing damage – need program for control
- Need more rangers to manage park use

Speaker 30 Nearby residents are opposed to dispersed parking

- Need better control of parking as proposed by the General Plan at Partridge Farm

Speaker 31 Dispersed parking takes Rangers away from park management.

- Neighbor of the park opposed to dispersed parking idea
- Need control of Wild Pigs. M.O.U. developed to begin control measures.

Speaker 32 Concern for use by Mountain Bikers.

- Disappointed to hear that State Parks would still consider Mountain Bike use in the park. "Once they are in the park, you can't get them out"

Speaker 33 Support for Dark Sky programs.

- Castle Rock accessible for viewing - educational value.
- Added value to children.
- Support facilities needed - lighting must be screened
- Guidelines exist for minimizing light pollution.
- No use of gas stoves, fires and light concerns.

Speaker 34 Sierra Club Member - Supports General Plan.

- Need parking control.
- Visitor Center desired.
- Desired visitor use would support the need for more than 55-car parking at Partridge Farm.

Where we are in the planning process:

1. Data Gathering
2. Identify Issues and concerns
3. Prepare Alternatives
4. Develop Preferred Draft Plan
5. Prepare General Plan Document
6. Public Review (CEQA)
7. **RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS**
8. Park Commission Approval



GENERAL PLAN Modifications

Based on the input that we received during the September public meeting, our Department recognized that portions of the plan would require some modifications. While we felt there was general consensus on the vision for a “wildlands” park, we acknowledge that we did not accurately reflect management’s intent to protect and preserve significant resources, or clarify future considerations for public access and facilities development.

Specific plan modifications are described in the form of an Addendum to the Preliminary General Plan. Please see page 9 for information on how to obtain or view a copy of this addendum to the Preliminary General Plan.

Plan modifications include:

- Strengthening the language of several guidelines in the plan, to emphasize the Department’s commitment to protecting resources,
- Rewriting the unit’s vision, as shown below, to reflect the interrelationship between visitors and the park’s enduring natural resource values, and
- Clarifying the need for resource assessments and evaluations prior to considering new access and facility improvements.

The Department recognizes the park’s special qualities and believes that the State Park classification gives priority protection for resources, with emphasis on the protection of the core ecological area afforded by the proposed Natural Preserve.

The following text (*in Italics*) are excerpts of the language modifications or additions, as described in the Addendum to the Preliminary General Plan. These are presented under the four major headings below:

- Unit Vision (revised)
- Managing Resources & Visitor Impacts
- Partridge Farm Area Land Use Management and Development
- Overnight use of Partridge Farm Area

The Department’s vision for the future of Castle Rock SP is best described in the following revised unit vision statement:

Unit Vision (Revised)

Castle Rock State Park is a place of outstanding scenic beauty possessing the vestigial wilderness qualities of the Santa Cruz Mountains, linked through biocorridors with other remnant natural ecosystems of the region. A management philosophy of protecting wildness guides visitors through the scenic vistas, interesting vegetation, and unique landforms.

The park lands and adjacent open space appear as interconnected wildlands recovering from previous human use. The visitor’s quest for open space and solitude are met through an integrated system of trails and protected natural areas. Encounters with the most significant park values intensify as visitors penetrate deeper into these forested canyons. An environmental ethic guides responsible behavior and minimizes visitor impacts on the natural systems. There is a heightened awareness of the significance and sensitivity of park resources and the effect recreation may have on the health of the ecosystem, with a recognition to preserve this area for future generations.



Northwest view from the Ridge Trail

Managing Resources & Visitor Impacts

It is recognized that any recreational use produces at least some impact, and that the Department needs to manage visitor impacts. Also recognized is the importance of providing and maintaining diversity in resource features and conditions of the park.

Goal: Apply processes and methods of visitor impact analysis to minimize resource impacts and maintain appropriate types and levels of visitor use within this unit.

Guidelines: In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), prior to site specific development or preparation of management plans, the area of potential impact will be surveyed and reviewed by appropriate personnel and responsible agencies. Resource conditions will be periodically assessed and appropriate actions taken to maintain acceptable conditions and manage use accordingly.



Interpretive shelter in the Partridge Farm area

Partridge Farm Area Land Use Management and Development

The management intent is that the Partridge Farm Area provide the primary access, contact, and orientation for visitors to Castle Rock State Park. For most visitors, this entrance area will serve as the main trailhead parking and transitional zone between the park's wildland areas and the urbanized setting from which they come. Management will establish a new park

headquarters area on this site that provides basic visitor services and information, with programs stressing park values and recreational opportunities. The open-air interpretive shelter will exhibit known natural and cultural features, and occasionally serve as an outdoor classroom. Overnight use will be considered in the form of walk-in campsites. However, day use and public contact facilities will be given a higher priority for implementation. New facilities will be esthetically designed to blend with their surroundings and respect the environment and its preservation. The entry experience for visitors to Castle Rock State Park, through Partridge Farm, will prepare visitors for a wildlands experience they will get when entering the trail system beyond.

Future management and use of the Partridge Farm Area will be guided through proper site planning and on-going evaluation of resource conditions, as well as understanding visitor and operational needs. The introduction of public access and use to this site will transform some of the current open space to developed parking, buildings, and outdoor use areas. However, the predominance of open space will be preserved and native vegetation reestablished to provide wildlife habitat and serve as a buffer between facilities and surrounding natural areas. Visitors can be oriented to the appropriate use areas and informed about the resource values and park rules and regulations. The Department will focus on mitigating visitor impacts in sensitive resource areas, establishing the initial public contact and operating functions, and improving access for people with disabilities.

An overall site plan will be prepared for the Partridge Farm Area, reflecting a phased approach to future development (see guidelines). This proposed change in land use will involve the design and construction of parking lots and entrance road in areas previously developed before the land became a state park. The design process will integrate facilities and vehicle and pedestrian circulation into the site with the least impacts on resources and surrounding activities. This site transformation and changes in the patterns of use will occur incrementally. The first phase of new parking at Partridge Farm will be managed for the primary visitor access and use of the Castle Rock Ridge area. Initially, any spaces retained in the existing parking lot will serve as a secondary access for trail use. Roadside parking will be removed along the highway outside both of these parking areas. The Partridge area parking will serve first time visitors and others coming to the park

headquarters office, as well as for special events. Visitors will be directed to trailheads and designated perimeter parking areas, depending on their interests and need for visitor services. Ultimately, the goal is for Partridge to become the primary entrance and day use parking area, where visitor use can be effectively managed and resources protected.

Overnight use of Partridge Farm Area

The park was evaluated during the general plan process for its potential to create opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation, consistent with its resource values and classification. It was recognized that some park visitors enjoy a primitive type of recreational experience and would like extended hours of use. Others wanted campsites that were more accessible from the main parking lot.

It is also recognized that the provision for 20 walk-in campsites at the Partridge Farm area will not meet a significant amount of the demand for camping in the San Francisco Bay Metropolitan Area. However, it could provide an opportunity for statewide visitors to have the unique experience of camping on the Castle Rock Ridge and enjoying spectacular evening, nighttime, and morning hours. Currently, this is available only to those who can backpack 3 miles into the park or reside in the local community.

Goal: Expand access opportunities for visitors who may travel a greater distance or want to experience the park's environment during the morning and evening hours. Also, eliminate physical barriers and provide equal accessibility to all programs and facilities.

The management intent is to establish approximately 20 walk-in campsites in the Partridge Farm Area. The walk-in campsites, unlike automobile campgrounds, will not have vehicle parking next to each campsite, and visitors will be required to walk a reasonable distance from a common parking area to campsites situated in a more natural setting. Campsites and support facilities will be designed for accessibility in accordance with ADA guidelines, and sited with minimal impact on resource values.

Prior to facility development, a resource assessment will be implemented in order to direct management on development, use limitations, and public access to the Partridge Farm Area and its surroundings. The restoration and protection of the natural communities in the area will offset unavoidable impacts associated with any development. As well, there is a commitment to provide quality interpretation of the natural and cultural values therein. Such interpretation is intended to stimulate an awareness and appreciation by all park visitors to share in the protection and preservation of these resource values.



Soil erosion at the base of Goat Rock

PARK PROJECTS

A committee, composed of local climbers from around the Bay Area, has been established to work with the park and write a management plan for climbing. The purpose is to develop guidelines and climbing rules that will help protect Castle Rock's natural resources while still providing enjoyable and reasonably safe climbing experiences.

A trail committee is also being formed to evaluate existing trails, establish criteria for new trails, and make recommendations for future trail connections and appropriate use.

The Department, with help from the Sempervirens Fund and the Varian Foundation, provided funding to do resource studies and site investigations in the vicinity of Goat Rock. This project will provide baseline data for evaluation of resource conditions and visitor impacts. For more information, please contact the Santa Cruz Mountains Sector Office at (831) 338-8865.

Where We Go From Here

The Department has reviewed all of the public comments that have been received and completed an addendum to the Preliminary General Plan in response to the public's concerns. The Preliminary General Plan that was submitted for CEQA review, along with the addendum, public comments and Department responses, will be forwarded to the State Park and Recreation Commission for their review and approval in March 2000. This newsletter and the addendum will be available for viewing on the State Parks Website.

The planning team very much appreciated the open and frank discussions at the public meeting. We have been making every effort to understand the diverse interests that people have regarding the future of Castle Rock State Park. Our goal is to present a general plan that establishes a clear vision for the future of this park, where public use is in harmony with resource preservation.

How to get Information

If you would like additional planning information about Castle Rock State Park, please give us a call, or write to the address below:

Dave Keck, Project Manager
1725 23rd Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95816
Phone: (916) 322-2997
Email: dkeck@parks.ca.gov

For state parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains, please call (831) 338-8865.

For information on other parks and programs in the State Park System, please visit the State Parks Website at:

<http://www.cal-parks.ca.gov>



Volunteers help build and maintain trails

PUBLIC HEARING

The California State Park and Recreation Commission will hold a public hearing to consider the adoption of the Castle Rock SP General Plan & proposed Natural Preserve Subclassification.

When: ***March 8, 2000***
Public hearing will begin around 9:30 am, or shortly thereafter

Where: *Issac Newton Senter Auditorium*
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California

Copies of the Preliminary General Plan document 2/99, Addendum 1/00, and the Department's response to public comments are available for public review at the following locations:

San Jose Main Library
180 W. San Carlos Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Santa Cruz Public Library
224 Church Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Big Basin Redwoods SP
21600 Big Basin Way
Boulder Creek, CA 95006

Saratoga Comm. Library
13650 Saratoga Avenue
Saratoga, CA 95113

San Francisco City Library
Civic Center
San Francisco, CA 94142

Santa Cruz District Office
600 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Santa Clara Central Library
2635 Homestead Road
Santa Clara, CA 95051

Los Gatos City Library
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95032