



Resolution 03-2023  
Adopted by the  
CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
At its regular meeting on March 3, 2023

**Red Rock Canyon State Park  
Natural Preserve Subclassification & Naming  
(Last Chance Canyon Natural Preserve and Scenic Canyon –  
Nightmare Gulch Natural Preserve)**

WHEREAS, the units of the State Park System are classified by the State Park and Recreation Commission into categories specified in California Public Resource Code Section 5019.50; and

WHEREAS, the classifications of “Natural Preserve” (PRC 5019.71) consists of distinct non-marine areas of outstanding natural interest established within the boundaries of a state park unit to preserve features such as rare or endangered plant and animal species and their supporting ecosystems or representative examples of plant and animal communities existing in California prior to the impact of civilization; and

WHEREAS, two areas within Red Rock Canyon State Park (“Park”) have previously been designated natural preserves to recognize their exceptional natural and scenic values. The Red Cliffs Natural Preserve was classified in 1974 and comprises 365 acres east of SR 14, including spectacular cliffs and lands at the mouth of Iron Canyon. The Hagen Canyon Natural Preserve was classified in 1974 and comprises 1,145 acres west of State Route 14 and south of Abbott Drive. It includes unique geologic formations and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the Red Rock Canyon State Park (“Park”) General Plan proposes the establishment of an additional 1,274 acre Natural Preserve (the proposed Last Chance Canyon Natural Preserve) in the central-eastern portion of the Park, in the vicinity of Last Chance Canyon, Pleasant Valley, and Cudahy Creek roads, to provide for the recognition and protection of the outstanding natural resources of this area. The perennial drainage and associated riparian area in Last Chance Canyon comprise the most significant riparian system within the Park, providing much-needed surface water, habitat structure, and ecological processes for the desert ecosystem. This riparian system is critical to the region’s ecological health and is known to support many common and sensitive species, including state and federally-listed “threatened” and “species of concern,” such as the Desert Tortoise; the area also supports important palaeontologic resources; and

WHEREAS, the Red Rock Canyon State Park General Plan proposes the establishment of a second new 1,155-acre Natural Preserve (the Scenic Canyon - Nightmare Gulch Natural Preserve) that encompasses the southern portions of Nightmare Gulch; to provide for the recognition and protection of the outstanding and significant natural resources of this area; this proposed Natural Preserve overlaps with the proposed Nightmare Gulch Cultural Preserve; Nightmare Gulch represents the best fossil-producing exposure in the Park, spanning the oldest period of local fossil history. There are no other consistent fossil-bearing strata of similar age in the Park. Golden Eagles and Prairie Falcons have been documented nesting on ledges high on the steep walls of Scenic Canyon, and documentation of such utilization in 1985 and 1986 led the federal government to establish a “bird of prey closure” annually from February 1 to July 1. This closure provides the solitude necessary for these and other raptor species to achieve a high degree of nesting success. When in effect, the closure prohibits all human entry to Nightmare Gulch. Many other sensitive species have also been documented in Nightmare Gulch, including but not limited to the Desert tortoise and Red Rock Canyon monkeyflower. The Scenic Canyon - Nightmare Gulch Natural Preserve was recommended in the Park’s original 1982 General Plan. Over 50 percent of Nightmare Gulch overlaps with the Birds of Prey Closure and is now contained within the Scenic Canyon - Nightmare Gulch Natural Preserve; and

WHEREAS, the Red Rock Canyon General Plan also proposes incorporating existing non-preserve “islands” within the existing Hagen Canyon and Red Cliffs Natural Preserves.

WHEREAS the establishment of the three proposed Natural Preserves and enlargement of the two existing Natural Preserves will provide for the recognition and protection of the outstanding natural resources within these areas;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED pursuant to Section 5019.71 of the Public Resources Code, and after proceedings in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, that the California State Park and Recreation Commission hereby classifies the above-identified portions of Red Rock Canyon State Park as Natural Preserves with the names Last Chance Canyon Natural Preserve and Scenic Canyon – Nightmare Gulch Natural Preserve, and that the size and location of these preserves be as described and as delineated in the Red Rock Canyon State Park General Plan; and that the existing Hagen Canyon and Red Cliffs Natural Preserves be enlarged by incorporating non-preserve “islands” into these preserves.

Attest: This Resolution was duly adopted by the California State Park and Recreation Commission on March 3, 2023, at the Commission’s duly noticed public meeting.

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Jonathan Barros  
Secretary of the Commission  
For Armando Quintero, Director  
California State Parks

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