

STEWARDS OF THE COAST AND REDWOODS
Operations Report – July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014
Austin Creek State Recreation Area
Prepared by Michele Luna, Executive Director

Hours of Operation

- Austin Creek, like Armstrong Redwoods, is open daily from 8 am to one hour past official sunset.
- Bullfrog Pond Campground was open the entire year with no periodic closures.
- Three backcountry sites stayed open the entire report period as well.
- The entrance station at Armstrong Redwoods was staffed year-round on the weekends, 4-5 weekdays during the winter, early spring and late fall, and 7 days a week during the later spring, summer and early fall.

Visitor Services & Public Safety

- With limited Ranger staff time at Armstrong Redwoods, Stewards continued to handle most of the Visitor Service non-law enforcement operations in Armstrong as well. Armstrong has its own maintenance staff.
- One of our greatest successes in 2014 was contracting with Hipcamp to provide camping reservation services at Bullfrog Pond campground, which was pre-approved by State Parks in January 2014. Fourteen sites are reservable 7 months in advance and 9 sites are first come, first serve. This effort increased camping revenue by 60% over last year. As a start-up, Hipcamp was great to work with and continue to make enhancements to their software based on our needs and recommendations.
 - Office staff and kiosk staff handled the customer service issues including cancellations and complaints. There is a \$10 cancellation fee per night.
 - Overall customer service was excellent and our ratings are high with hipcamp users.
- Stewards recruited and trained public assistance hikers and equestrians to monitor the trails in Armstrong and Austin Creek, to give out information, provide directions, dispense water, and report any unusual activity.
- Stewards worked with CalFire on a fire prevention plan, which included having campers sign a fire permit. This enabled us to sell firewood all summer. We did ban campfires in the backcountry by later summer, when it was very dry and fire danger was high. Trees in the campsites were limbed and we maintained a 5-foot perimeter around each fire pit. We also put buckets at each water spigot and asked campers to use water to put out their fires at the end of the night. Camphosts were also watchful of the campfires in the campgrounds. Future plans include making spark arrester screens for each fire pit.

Campground Operations and Maintenance

- During the summer of 2014, we recruited camphosts to work the weekends at our camphost site. We had one couple, who also camphosted with us in 2013, and four

other individuals who took weekend shifts as well. We provide camphosts with a \$50 per day stipend. Camphosts sold firewood and helped with camping reservations and housekeeping including restroom cleaning and trash service.

- Both restroom septic tanks were pumped this summer and we replaced a toilet in one of the restrooms.

Special Events

- Five different sites in Austin Creek SRA were identified as potential special event sites for groups ranging from 20 to 100. They include Schoolhouse Flat, Vista Point and three sites in Bullfrog Pond Campground (the campfire center, two relatively flat campsites (5 & 6) next to one another, and an area overlooking the pond).
- Weddings: Stewards had about 4 wedding inquiries but none scheduled during this report period.
- In early May, Stewards conducted the 2nd Annual Armstrong/Austin Creek Trail Run in partnership with Pacific Coast Trail Runs, Inc. The event was a success and raised money for Austin Creek SRA.
- The second Sunset Dinner on August 2nd, 2104 was held at Schoolhouse Flat. This year was much smaller but, none-the-less it was a lovely evening and those who participated had a great time. We focused on the 50th Anniversary of Austin Creek and shared information about the history of Austin Creek. Plans are already underway to plan next year's event with our Pond Farm partners, the California State Parks Foundation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- We also put on a Family Weekend in your Parks event on June 21-22. We promoted this event to Latino park visitors. A family campout took place at Bullfrog Pond campground on June 21st, which included a wonderful interpretive campfire program with John Schubert talking about the history of Austin Creek, campfire songs and s'mores. On Sunday June 22nd there were activities at Armstrong Redwoods including horse and carriage rides, a live bird exhibit by the Bird Rescue Center and other activities put on by our docents and naturalists. There was multi-cultural music and an Aztec blessing and dancing. We had Spanish-speaking staff and docents available for those who needed translation.
- Other events that were held in Armstrong Redwoods and provided support for operations in Austin Creek SRA: Art in the Park (July), the Old Grove Festival (September). Both events were well attended and did well financially.

Interpretive Programs

- Ten Junior Ranger Programs were held on Sunday mornings from 10:00 – 11:00 am at the campfire center at Bullfrog Pond Campground from June to August.
- Three Star-gazing events were held again at Vista Point during the summer.
- Docent-Led Hikes took place on two different dates with a total of 80 Boy Scouts.
- School programs included the CAMEOS program with Santa Rosa and Piner High Schools. 95 students did scientific inquiry studies in both Armstrong Redwoods and Austin Creek SRA.
- Stewards sponsored our first UC California Naturalist Certification Program with 20 participants. This 6-week course took place in all our parks including Austin Creek.

- Docent Recruitment and Training took place for Public Assistance Volunteers.
- Seminar about the Legacy of Pond Farm and Marguerite Wildenhain took place in June.
- National Leave No Trace trainer program in collaboration with the Northern Area Boy Scouts Pomo District took place at Bullfrog Pond Campground.

Cultural Resource Stewardship

- Pond Farm Pottery is a significant cultural site in Austin Creek SRA, and our partnership State Parks, the California State Parks Foundation (CSPF) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) to restore and repurpose the site for future sustainability made great progress this past year.
 - NTHP provided funding for consulting services with Caitlin Strokosh, Executive Director from the Alliance of Artists Communities.
 - CSPF funded Kathrin Welsh Howe, a consultant to do a marketing survey and a business plan. The final Business Plan and an Executive Summary were completed in January 2014.
 - DPR applied for Prop 84 funds with the help of the partners and were awarded \$443,000 for stabilization of the barn and Marguerite' home.
 - A second meeting with partners, including DPR staff from Sacramento and the Russian River District, was held to plan for the Prop 84 funded project.
 - Stewards helped coordinate numerous site visits to Pond Farm with project partner affiliates and potential donors.
 - Monthly planning meetings were scheduled by CSPF staff to keep everyone updated on project plans.
 - Funding was awarded by the Sonoma County Landmarks Commission to start a docent program at Pond Farm. The amount was originally supposed to be \$5766 but was reduced to \$3133 due to a County budget shortfall.
 - Pond Farm was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance, ensuring increased protection and recognition of the site.

Natural Resource Stewardship (workdays)

- Stewards' Trail Crew did stewardship workdays in Austin Creek every other month during the year. Activities included trail maintenance, wood splitting, campground maintenance, tree limbing and dealing with down trees.
- Stewards supported the Youth Ecology Corps by providing 2 weeks of work, 4 days a week for 5 hours/day. Trail clearance was accomplished by about 10 youth.
- Staff did significant amounts of brush cleaning, campground clean up, weed eating, and sign installation in Austin Creek.

Recreation

- Stewards maintained and operated 24 campsites (including camphost site at Bullfrog Pond Campground). Campsites were cleaned, tree hazards were removed, and fire rings were kept clean. Restrooms were equipped with sanitizer dispensers.
- The camphost site was used every weekend. Stewards "green trailer" was taken up to the site and used for equipment and housekeeping storage.

- Backcountry campsites were kept clean up and outhouses were serviced once a week.

Signage and Marketing

- Some new signage was designed and purchased to more clearly identify directions to Bullfrog Pond Campground.
- Brochures were updated with current information to inform the public about Bullfrog Pond Campground and the backcountry camping rules and regulations, as well as interpretive facts about the park.
- Information about Austin Creek operations was updated on Stewards' website.
- Stewards staff worked with DPR to update the DPR website with current information about the park.

Concession Operations

- The horse concession was closed down in early 2014.

AB 1478 Funding

- 1478 Funding was tracked and Monitored
 - DPR Staff were paid to monitor special events put on by Stewards to benefit Austin Creek SRA.
 - The planning for a trail repair and stabilization project was undertaken by DPR staff.
 - The Pond Farm deferred maintenance fence project was planned and supplies were purchased.



Annual Revenue and Expenditure Report – July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

Park Unit: AUSTIN CREEK STATE RECREATION AREA

Operator: Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

State's Fiscal Year: July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

Estimated Visitors: 210,671

REVENUE	2nd Fiscal Year 7.1.13 to 6.30.14 Total
Armstrong/Austin Creek	July - Jun
Austin Creek – Camping fees	71,014
AR/AC Entrance Station – Day-Use - 30% for AC	54,124
CSPF Grants	40,000
Other Donations and Fundraising	11,885
Special Events – Weddings, EcoAdventures	150
Firewood Sales	2,941
Total Revenue Austin Creek	180,114
Total Revenue plus volunteer time	186,893
EXPENSES	
Austin Creek	
Salary -Executive Staff (ED, AD)	9,202
Salary -Admin Staff (OC, OA, AA)	4,732
Salary -Field Operations Manager (FOM)	42,633
Salary - Service Aides (SA)	28,654
Salary -Programs Director (PD)	5,800
Salary - Volunteer Manager (VM)	400
Benefits - 15%	13,713
Value of Volunteer Time	6,778
Contracts - Marketing and Website	5,420
Office - Equipment & Supplies	1,298
Housekeeping Supplies	837
Insurance/Legal	15,000
Signage/Brochures	693
Vehicle Maintenance, gas, storage container	5,821
Field Equipment and Supplies	1,260
Utilities - Trash, Electricity, pumping, Phone	1,538
Camphosts (trailer and supplies) storage, stipends	50
Pond Farm Expenses (Docent Program)	22
Total Expenses Austin Creek minus Volunteer Time	137,073
Net Cash Rev/Exp Austin Creek	43,041

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FINANCIAL NARRATIVE

July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

Background: Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods entered into an Operating Agreement with DPR for Austin Creek State Recreation Area on August 1, 2012. The agreement was signed by the Director on June 27, 2012 but was delayed going to the Department of General Services and the Attorney General's office. Stewards was given an early entry permit to operate until the final agreement went into effect. The entrance kiosk for both Armstrong Redwoods and Austin Creek began operating under Stewards' management on August 15, 2012 and Bullfrog Pond Campground opened on August 17, 2012. The Backcountry campsites in Austin Creek were opened before Memorial Day in 2013. Stewards has updated our agreement twice with the most current amendment completed in May of 2014 with the Department of General Services providing approval on June 17, 2014.

Revenue: Stewards' operational revenue from Austin Creek day-use and camping fees generated \$125,138 during the report period, which is an increase of over \$60,000 for the 9 ½ months that Stewards operated in 2012/2013.

Stewards retains 30% of the day-use fees for Austin Creek. Stewards requested an increase to 40% due to the amount of time we provide Visitor Service support at Armstrong Redwoods, however the District was not able to approve that increase at this time.

DPR revenue goals for Armstrong Redwoods were exceeded by 14% with Stewards handling day-use fee collection and park pass sales were 36% over target.

Other revenue generated for park operations were derived from grants (\$40,000), donations and fundraising (\$11,885) and special events and campfire wood sales (\$3,091). Firewood sales provided a significant increase in revenue due to the fact that there was no fire ban put in place this year.

In-Kind Volunteer Time: Volunteers were used to accomplish stewardship and natural resource projects. Volunteers contributed 274 hours @ \$24.75/hour for a value of \$6,778 of in-kind services. http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

Expenses: Per the Operating Agreement, all money derived from operational revenue must be used for Austin Creek operations. During this report period, Austin Creek Operational expenses were less revenue by \$43,041. This excess will cover increased expenses for the peak of the busy season (July through October).

Staffing includes one full-time Field Operations Manager and one part-time service aide during the slow season. During the busy season, Stewards employs one full-time service aide and two-three full time service aides. During this accounting period, Field Staff expenses were \$71,287.

Additional staffing costs include administrative hours from Stewards' Executive Director, Administrative Director, Administrative Assistant, Programs Director and Volunteer Manager. Including employee benefits other personnel expenses were \$33,847 for the reporting period.

Other large expenses incurred were for insurance, vehicle expenses and enhancements to our website. Insurance costs for the 5700 acres and campground operations are \$15,000 annually.