

History of the California Natural Landmarks Program

The California Natural Landmarks Program was legislated by the passage of Assembly Bill 2900, a bill authored by Assembly Member George Plescia (Republican, San Diego) and signed into law by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in October 2006. The bill was sponsored by the Los Angeles and Golden Gate chapters of Audubon California, and by the Resource Landowners Coalition, a group of large landowners, farmers, ranchers, and water agencies. The program is intended to recognize the best examples of California's ecological and geological features in both public and private ownership, and to encourage both greater stewardship of these natural areas and new partnerships between public and private entities. Designation as a California Natural Landmark does not infer public ownership, nor does it necessarily provide public access.

The National Natural Landmarks (NNL) Program is administered by the National Parks Service, the only natural areas program that identifies and recognizes the best examples of biological and geological features (of a particular biophysiological province) in both public and private ownership nationwide. The program was established in May 1962 by Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. Regulations governing the NNL Program were developed in 1982, and the current regulations were published in the Federal Register in 1999. National Natural Landmarks (NNLs) are designated by the Secretary of the Interior, with the owner's concurrence. To date, fewer than 600 sites have been so designated. There have been 94 NNLs designated since 1962 in the Pacific West Region of the National Park Service, 35 of these are in California. Several designated NNLs are state parks, including Mt. Diablo SP, Point Lobos SR, and Anza-Borrego Desert SP. Irvine Ranch, the first California Natural Landmark designated in April 2008, was previously designated a NNL. The NNLs are not National Parks, and NNL status does not indicate public ownership. Many sites are not open for visitation. For more information on the NPS National Natural Landmark Program, visit: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/nnl/>.