



Beyond Rules and Regulations: Trail Signs that Enhance User Experience and Effectively Get Your Messages Out

Presenters:

Randy Hawley, Interpretive Sign Designer and Retired Park Ranger
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If you haven't started thinking about your trail signs as an extension of your current staff, you should. Trail signs that effectively communicate your messages to the trail user represent an important management tool. For many trail users, the only contact they will ever have with your agency or organization occurs when they encounter one of the signs you have provided along the trail. Are your signs getting your messages out? Do they adequately orient, advise, and inform your users? Do they contribute to the overall trail experience?

The goal of this workshop is to provide you with the techniques and approaches necessary for developing information and interpretive trail signs that can effectively deliver your messages to trail users. Through a combination of outdoor activities and indoor discussions, we will address the following topics:

Interpretive Signs – What you need to know to make sure your interpretive panels will effectively communicate with your visitors.

The focus of this discussion will be on developing interpretive themes for your trail, understanding the basics of what makes a good interpretive sign, and tips for working with the professional interpretive sign designer who is responsible for molding your ideas into words and pictures that will provoke the attention, curiosity, or interest of your trail users. We will travel to the southern edge of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge for a morning stroll along the Bayshore Bikeway, where we will begin our discussion on interpretive themes. Later in the day, we will break into small groups to prepare an interpretive theme for this part of the bikeway.



San Diego Bay's Bayshore Bikeway



Information Signs - Providing signs that adequately orient, inform, manage, and prepare the user for the trail experience.

We will review the checklist of essential components for information signs and discuss options for additional information that can enhance the users overall experience. At Mission Trails Regional Park, we will have the opportunity to observe some different approaches to presenting necessary information to park and trail users.

Sign Materials and Costs – What is the best material to use for a trail sign?

A variety of materials are available, with each having its own advantages and disadvantages. The basic differences are visual

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appearance, graphic and text resolution capability, durability, resistance to vandalism and graffiti, and cost of fabrication. We will review some of these materials, their cost, and their advantages or disadvantages in specific settings.

Presenter Bios

Randy Hawley is a retired park ranger/manager with a degree in Park Management from San Diego State University. He has worked for and designed interpretive signs for California State Parks, the City of San Diego, Walnut Creek, and the County of San Diego. He was the first Park Ranger hired by the City of San Diego and had his badge retired in 1999. Randy's proven interpretive skills combined with his knowledge of trail and land management issues make him uniquely qualified to design interpretive and information trail signs that meet the needs of both the trail user and the agency or land manager. He currently works with agencies in designing interpretive exhibits and facilities and in conducting training. He can be contacted at pbranger@sbcglobal.net.

Sandra Farrell, Exhibit Designer/Coordinator for California State Parks, has over twenty years of experience in the exhibit design industry. Before moving to San Diego, Sandra spent three years as part of the in-house exhibits team assembled to develop interactive exhibits for the Arizona Science Center in Phoenix. It was here, during the development of the exhibits on human physiology, that she began to fully understand the connection between the natural environment and its roll in keeping us physically and mentally healthy. Three years ago, Sandra joined California State Parks. Sandra has recently completed the wetland trail at Rio de Los Angeles State Park and is currently working on exhibit projects for the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook Visitor Center and a new Chino Hills Visitor Center which will break ground in the next year.