



CARMEL AREA STATE PARKS GENERAL PLAN AND EIR

Preferred Alternative Public Open House Summary of Open House Comments

Date: June 1, 2016
Time: 6:00 – 9:00pm
Location: Wedgewood Wedding & Banquet Center
 Rancho Cañada Golf Club
 4860 Carmel Valley Road
 Carmel, CA 93923

Open House Purpose

- Present a summary of the preferred alternative
- Offer the opportunity to learn about preferred alternative details at information stations
- Provide a public comment period before, during, and after the open house

Planning Team Attendees:

Ellie Wagner, California State Parks	Mike Parker, Ascent Environmental
Mat Fuzie, California State Parks	Curtis Alling, Ascent Environmental
Steve Bachman, California State Parks	Heidi Gen Kuong, Ascent Environmental
Jim Bilz, California State Parks	Donna Plunkett, practiceNATURE

Summary of Open House Comments

California State Parks (CSP) has summarized below the public input about the preferred alternative that was received during the June 1, 2016 Public Open House and the comment period beginning before and extending three weeks after the open house. All input has been reviewed and key points are summarized below. Verbatim written comments received by CSP by the comment deadline are included as part of this summary as Attachment B. The public comments are being reviewed and evaluated for input to the preparation of the Carmel Area State Parks (CASP) Preliminary General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report (Preliminary GP/Draft EIR), which will be released for a public review and comment period in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.

Overview and Summary of Open House Agenda

On June 1, 2016, CSP conducted a public open house for the purpose of presenting the Preferred Alternative proposed for the CASP GP, which was formulated from prior analysis and public input. This was the third public meeting held during the general plan process. The general plan is being prepared for four CASP units/properties, which are:

- ▲ Point Lobos State Natural Reserve
- ▲ Carmel River State Beach (proposed to be combined with Point Lobos Ranch property as a new state park unit, to be named at a later date)
- ▲ Point Lobos Ranch Property (proposed to be combined with Carmel River State Beach as a new state park unit, to be named at a later date)
- ▲ Hatton Canyon Property (to remain an unclassified unit)

Two weeks prior to the public open house, all meeting materials related to the preferred alternative, including technical reports addressing economics and traffic/parking, were posted to the CASP GP public website (www.parks.ca.gov/caspgp). Written comments were encouraged and accepted via email, postal mail, or in person before, during and for three weeks following the open house (until June 25, 2016). An announcement and newsletter were distributed to the project contact list in advance of the open house to communicate details about the session and invite participation. A news release announcing the meeting was sent to the local *Monterey Herald* and *Carmel Pine Cone* newspapers. The noticed format for the public open house consisted of a brief presentation providing an overview of the preferred alternative, a lengthy time period for participants to visit information stations to learn more about the details of the preferred alternative, and the opportunity to provide written input on comment sheets.

The preferred alternative, which was developed based on previous planning and analysis efforts and prior public input, was presented to the attendees. Following the presentation, the planning team opened the floor for oral public comments in response to the number of participants requesting an oral comment period. Following the presentation and oral comment session, participants had the opportunity to continue discussion about each of the units by visiting four stations staffed by planning team members. The stations included two large maps of the preferred alternative for each of the four units. Handouts, which included management zone summaries and maps for the Reserve and the combined new state park unit, were provided to participants upon arrival.

Approximately 260 people attended the public open house (See Attachment A). This summary includes the oral and written comments received. Attachment B includes the compilation of all written comments received from the general public during the comment period. This compilation does not include comments received from stakeholders (e.g., Point Lobos Foundation) or agencies (e.g., Caltrans).

The following summary is based on the planning team's understanding of oral comments heard during the open house and a thorough review of written comments. Input received from the public during the open house and the comment period is being evaluated and fully considered in the development of the Preliminary GP/Draft EIR. The public will have additional opportunity to review and comment on the Preliminary GP/Draft EIR during a 45-day public review and comment period. In addition, there will be a public information session scheduled during the CEQA public review period.

Two attachments are included with this summary:

- ▲ Attachment A: Preferred Alternative Public Open House Sign-in Sheets
- ▲ Attachment B: Compilation of General Public Written Comments Received During the Public Comment Period

Open House Welcome and Introduction

Mat Fuzie, Monterey District Superintendent, opened the meeting by welcoming all participants. He also summarized key elements of the preferred alternative, as well as the components from the previous action alternatives that are not included in the preferred alternative. Items no longer being considered in the preferred alternative primarily include the aerial trail, overnight accommodations (new cabins, family campsites), visitor centers, retail/café uses, and substantially expanded parking. He also reiterated that the Hatton Canyon Property would not be transferred back to Caltrans, but that CSP is exploring a transfer to one or more appropriate local or regional agencies.

Preferred Alternative Presentation

Curtis Alling, Ascent Environmental, provided an overview of the open house agenda, a summary of the previous public workshop on the concept alternatives held in July 2015, and an overview of how the preferred alternative was crafted in response to public comment and now has a stronger focus on conservation, restoration, and protection of natural resources and protection of cultural resources.

Donna Plunkett, practiceNATURE, described the preferred alternative management zones, including the proposed uses, facilities, and resource management actions for each of the CASP units. She also spoke about the new unit classification including consolidating the current Carmel River State Beach, Point Lobos Ranch Property, and inland portion of the Reserve (east of State Route [SR] 1) into a combined state park unit. The current Reserve property west of SR 1 will remain as a State Natural Reserve. Hatton Canyon Property is proposed to be managed in its current condition without any facility, use, or classification changes with a goal to transfer this property to another local or regional agency.

Donna highlighted where many existing visitor uses and access points would remain and also where changes would take place, including opening of the inland area of the proposed New State Park to the public. She also noted that limited access would be provided at the Odello Farm area of the proposed New State Park's coastal area (CRSB) to allow environmentally sensitive, well-designed access near the historic farm complex. She noted that the focus on conservation is evident with the extensive natural and cultural preserves proposed, which is one of the most resource-protective sub-classifications within a state park unit. Donna spoke about the various transportation and access options and highlighted where new parking may be built if deemed necessary in the future. She emphasized that the General Plan is intended to provide guidance for approximately 30 years and not all elements shown in the plan may ultimately be implemented, pending additional detailed project-specific consideration and funding.

Oral Comment Session

At the request of the attendees, the planning team opened the floor to hear oral comments from the participants. The comments generally opposed proposed changes to the park units. Comment topics included concerns about a perception that Hatton Canyon would be returned to Caltrans, exacerbation of existing traffic congestion, development at the parks that may attract more visitation, visitor uses in the Odello Farm management zone, parking along SR 1, and any new parking areas proposed. A detailed record of the oral comments was not taken; however, all oral comment topics were raised in the written comments received and included in Attachment B

Information Station Session

Following the presentation and oral comment period, planning team members were available at four stations displaying maps of the preferred alternative for the units. The New State Park was divided into

two stations—coastal area (current CRSB) and inland area (current Point Lobos Ranch property). Attendees visited unit stations to learn more about the preferred alternative details and continue asking questions. Participants were encouraged to write down their comments and submit them in the comment box provided. Approximately two hours were allotted for the information station session.

#	Key Points Summarized from Public Input
1	Summary of Public Input
2	<p>A summary of the key themes and topics is provided based on a thorough review of all written and oral comments. This summary is not intended to be an exhaustive listing of all issues raised. Please see Attachment B for the complete record of all written comments.</p> <p>The key comment topics related to the following items (<i>not listed in order of comment frequency or importance</i>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>▲ Traffic Congestion – Commenters raised traffic congestion as a major concern for the area and especially for SR 1 around the park units. People expressed that any development of the units in this area has the potential to further exacerbate the already serious traffic congestion on SR 1. The addition of off-highway parking and the prospect that more visitors may use the parks are perceived to create more traffic congestion, particularly affecting nearby residents. It was recommended that shuttle or transit plans be coordinated with the local transportation agencies prior to the preparation of the CASP General Plan to reduce traffic congestion. If parking for the Reserve is developed east of SR 1, many commenters felt that an underground connection beneath SR 1 between the inland area of the New State Park and the Reserve would improve traffic congestion and provide safe pedestrian and vehicle access.</p> <p>▲ Parking – Many commenters were not in favor of any additional off-highway parking because of the perception that it would add to traffic congestion and bring more visitors to the area. Concerns were also raised about the effects of new parking areas and visitation on ecology and sensitive habitats, particularly in the Odello Farm management zone. Some commenters felt that a small amount of parking near the Bay School would be useful. Some commenters also supported parking in the inland area of the proposed New State Park to replace existing parking in the Reserve. Other commenters were not in favor of removing parking from the Reserve, but instead suggested creating a reservation system for parking spaces in the Reserve. Many local residents visit the Reserve on a regular basis and wish to retain the ability to drive and park within the Reserve. Some commenters expressed that the Hudson House could be a suitable location for limited parking serving the Reserve, because it would be on the same side of the highway as the Reserve and could be screened from view. Many commenters urged the removal of parking along SR 1 and that it should not require serious accidents or fatalities for Caltrans to mandate removal of highway parking. Some commenters expressed support for the Board of Supervisors to seek closure of SR 1 parking and for charging a walk-in fee at the Reserve. Commenters generally supported charging for off-highway parking, assuming free parking can be removed from SR 1. Other commenters suggested replacing the parking at the CRSB parking lot adjacent to Scenic Road that was eliminated by flooding and also considering adding parking at Rio Road. Some commenters expressed support for distant parking lots to serve these parks with a shuttle service to reduce local congestion, such</p>

#	Key Points Summarized from Public Input
	<p>as from Fort Ord Dunes State Park (which is approximately 15 miles north of the Reserve).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>▲ CSP Funding and Staff Capacity to Manage Existing Units – Several commenters expressed that there is a current lack of funding and staffing to manage the parks as they are today and felt that adding more facilities with the potential to bring more visitors would further exacerbate park operations. Commenters asked that CSP focus on better management of the existing parks. Safety, trash, resource degradation, and maintenance backlogs were all cited as current issues that are not being adequately resolved.</p> <p>▲ Ecological Protection and Restoration – Some commenters noted the importance of the park units as habitat and natural areas and felt that new development, such as parking and visitor facilities, would have negative effects on the ecology and sensitive habitats, with many comments focused on the Odello Farm management zone and surrounding Odello West area (Lagoon/Wetland management zone). The importance of Odello West as a wetland area and as bird habitat was emphasized by several commenters. Commenters noted that the parks should remain as natural as possible, preserved as is, and/or restored where damage has already occurred. Some commenters felt that a balance could be reached to allow for visitor access, if environmentally sensitive, well-designed facilities were planned and parking areas were minimized. However, other commenters worried that further development in the area would be a waste of money, due to the potential for sea level rise flooding and the river being reconnected with the floodplain. Concern was also expressed about adverse effects of off-leash dogs. There was support for further natural resource protection of the Odello West area as an important birding area, including a suggestion to support a designation as a National Estuary with other partner agencies.</p> <p>▲ Hatton Canyon Transfer – Most comments about the potential to transfer ownership and management to another agency were received from residents living near the Hatton Canyon Property. These residents supported leaving the property ownership and use unchanged. Commenters cited the legal documents related to the original transfer from Caltrans to CSP and noted a clause that they believed required the land to revert to Caltrans. Some commenters expressed support for transferring the property to the local wastewater district for limited maintenance access and leaving it as open space with no new recreational activity.</p> <p>▲ Trash and Waste – Some commenters raised the topic of trash along the roadways near the park units and trash and waste within the park units, including human waste. Commenters requested more restrooms and stressed the importance of park operations being able to adequately manage people and maintain the grounds.</p> <p>▲ Questions about the Traffic and Parking Study – Commenters who reviewed the Traffic and Parking Study provided on the CSP website questioned different aspects of the study, including the time of day and dates that data were collected and the scope of the study. It was recommended that the study focus on developing solutions to address the severe existing traffic congestion and other limitations that may affect the General Plan.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Access Limitation/Permits/Reservation System – Many commenters agreed with the preferred alternative’s goal to limit access to the Reserve, and suggested controlling visitation to other units, as well. There were suggestions for a parking permit and reservation system to the Reserve. A reservation system was mentioned as a way to manage visitation for conservation purposes and reduce traffic congestion. Some commenters expressed that a reservation system for all the park units should be considered. ▲ Social Media Effects – Commenters expressed the perception that more frequent coverage in social media may be contributing to substantially increased visitation in the last two years as travel websites promote the Reserve and Carmel River State Beach. Local residents have noted a marked increase in traffic and visitation to the area during this time period. ▲ Park Name –Several commenters from the Native American community strongly urged naming the New State Park, "Ichxenta" (Ishxenta) or "Ichxenta Iwano" (i.e., Ichxenta village) to honor indigenous ancestors who inhabited this area up to 10,000 years ago. Other naming suggestions included retaining “Point Lobos Ranch” or considering “A. M. Allan Ranch.” ▲ Other Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide bike lanes on roads and places for cyclists. ○ Perform a cumulative impact analysis including all the region’s park plans to understand the impacts of parking, wildfire, and other threats to the area residents from park use. ○ Develop a wildfire protection plan to address the threat of wildfire from park use, reduced vegetation management, drought, and the potential for wildfire from primitive camping. ○ Improve communication with the community to alleviate confusion. ○ Make recommendations about concessions specific as to services and location. ○ Allow for multi-use trails, including for mountain bicycles. ○ Reconsider including a residential environmental education facility at the inland area of the New State Park.