



The Special Events issue

“Celebrate the journey, and stop worrying about the potholes,” an old saying goes. And what better place to celebrate than at a park? California’s recreation areas have hosted everything from toddlers’ birthdays to world’s fairs and Olympics, and events of every scale in between.

In this issue, we explore parks’ roles as venues for celebrations, festivals, and other special events.

Our motivation comes partly from California State Parks’ role in the upcoming 34th America’s Cup yacht race in San Francisco Bay—Angel Island State Park offers an outstanding vantage. Considering how to welcome the competition’s festivities led us to a deeper appreciation for how parks support and benefit from special events, and the recreation that visitors find at those occasions.

Special events can yield revenues, build audiences, recruit volunteers, increase awareness, strengthen community, and make enduring memories. They depend, however, on thoughtful management and appropriate facilities and sites sometimes overlooked in park planning.

So this issue attempts to shine some light on the subject. We’ll worry about the potholes some other time.



Inside

America’s Cup and Angel Island SP	page 3
Special events offer visibility	page 4
Popularity of outdoor cultural activities	page 7
Tips from event coordinators	page 8

Planning is key to memorable special events—and parks benefit, too

by Ellie Wagner, ewagner@parks.ca.gov

With their inviting natural, cultural, scenic, and recreation resources, parks are memorable places and popular sites for special events. Park managers and planners can help ensure successful events by incorporating key components and guidelines in the site selection, facility design and amenities that are offered in special event areas. Some of these considerations include planning for adaptability, accessibility, minimal impact, and potential partnerships.

Adaptability: Plan for multi-purpose uses and flexible program activities; select convenient locations with quality furnishings and amenities adaptable to a variety of events at different times. Park areas and event spaces with multiple uses are generally more active, flexible, stable and cost efficient than single activity

Planning, page 2.

Events create special experiences on California’s trails

by Dan Ray, dray@parks.ca.gov

California’s recreational trails attract many users—visitors enjoying an afternoon stroll, equestrians, mountain bikers, long distance trekkers, and travelers following historic routes through scenic countrysides. Some trail agencies and organizations use special events to draw new users to these routes, winning attention, engaging volunteers and donors, and creating memorable experiences for trail users.

Bay Area Ridge Trail events

In the San Francisco Bay Area, trail events are building awareness for and involving supporters in improving the Bay Area Ridge Trail. When complete, this 550+-mile loop will connect over 75 parks and open spaces overlooking San Francisco Bay. Unlike the region’s well-established attractions,

Trails, page 6.

Planning, from page 1.

sites. Adapt the activity to the space and/or the space to the activity.

- Incorporate a range of amenities to promote public use, such as a small amphitheater for performances, food preparation areas (indoor and outdoor), open space activity areas, structured and informal seating areas, shade structures, wind screens, restrooms, and benches.
- Consider providing commercial grade cooking facilities and/or catering kitchens to accommodate a wider variety of events.
- Provide utilities (water, electricity) with convenient and flexible parking (including overflow areas, bus, and RV parking).
- Adapt the use of existing buildings and provide new multi-use facilities.
- Transform underused buildings and outdoor spaces for groups and special events.

Accessibility: Event spaces should accommodate all people and, if possible, provide easy access for visitors traveling by various transportation types. Facilities should be designed and located in proximity to each other to promote accessibility and the most efficient use of the space. For example, locate picnic areas with shade structures near food preparation areas and convenient to parking and restrooms.

- Integrate facilities for auto, bus, train, bicycle and pedestrian

modes of transport, reducing dependence on private vehicle use.

- Locate parking areas near primary event spaces and encourage use of public transit or shuttles.
- Explore parking alternatives for special events, such as unpaved overflow parking areas, satellite/remote areas, and special event shuttle services.



Visitors enjoy a production of "The Wizard of Oz," a special event held at Mt. Tamalpais State Park's 3,750-seat outdoor Mountain Theater.

- Consider partnering with adjacent properties to provide additional parking, especially for large events.
- Use Universal Design concepts to ensure access for users of a variety of ages and abilities, including persons with mobility, visual, hearing or cognitive impairments (refer to California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines, 2009 edition).

Minimal Impact: When planning event spaces and scheduling appropriate events,

anticipate public needs and consider the impact on park and nearby resources. To ensure new and repeat visitors, manage the site and visitor activity to avoid adverse impacts and be prepared to adapt to changing conditions, activities, and demographics.

- Observe and understand those currently using the space and how they are using it. Identify problems and seek solutions and new ideas to accommodate visitor needs.

- With event sponsors, determine site capacity, adequate facilities, and infrastructure for the estimated number of visitors, and work to minimize impacts on the park resources and other visitors.

- Minimize site disturbance. Consider rehabilitating existing disturbed or developed sites for event spaces. Avoid developing sites that contain sensitive species, habitats or cultural resources. To protect resources, use barriers, including natural barricades such as logs or fencing, post signs, or otherwise restrict access as required.

- Locate structures and facilities to take advantage of scenic views as focal points and minimize negative visual impacts or screen undesirable views from inside or outside the park.

- Monitor the event to ensure adequate resource protection and evaluate use of the space. Discuss positive elements and potential improvements with event sponsors and have a plan

in place to return temporary sites to their previous undisturbed condition.

Partnerships: Parks are excellent venues for events involving partners and stakeholders. Partnerships and collaborative planning promotes cooperation among stakeholders, can achieve multiple objectives, and offer shared benefits. These benefits might include the contribution of innovative ideas, financial support, donation of in-kind goods and services and

collaboration on joint marketing, fundraising, and security.

- Involve stakeholders, partners, and potential partners in planning event spaces. Discuss space and facility requirements, shared goals, and mutual interests.
- Publicize event space with local and regional civic groups, recreation interests, and nonprofits. Promote joint planning with regional and national partners to increase the visibility of the park and support program planning and

development.

- Identify adjacent non-park property and facilities for potential partnerships. For example, a wedding could be held in the park with the reception at a nearby golf course.

In short, plan ahead to enjoy successful park events and promote lifelong positive memories. ●

Angel Island State Park is prime viewing spot for America’s Cup Race

by Stuart Hong, shong@parks.ca.gov

San Francisco will host the 34th America’s Cup, which is expected to bring about \$1 billion to the local economy. The America’s Cup is a trophy awarded to the winner of the regatta match of specialized sailing yachts. San Francisco will see at least 43 days of racing over more than a year before the final match in September 2013.

For the first time in Cup history, the race will not be in the open sea. The course is wholly within San Francisco Bay, passing between Alcatraz Island and Angel Island State Park, one of the best locations to view the entire race. Elevated locations along the south side of Angel Island SP will offer unsurpassed views of the racing yachts.

California State Parks can create a race viewing opportunity on Angel Island SP that could generate significant revenue. Key elements being considered include temporary pavilions at prime viewing locations, a variety of admission prices, food and wine vendors, special events, and sponsorships.



The south side of Angel Island offers a superb view of the 34th America’s Cup race course (blue line).

Race organizers estimate there will be 300,000-600,000 visitors during “peak weekend” Cup race match periods. In estimating potential attendance at Angel Island State Park during these times, a comparison can be drawn from the San Francisco Fleet Week, when an estimated 1 million people view the boats around the bay and Angel Island State Park has 2,500-4,000 visitors. ●



The annual Southern California Woodie Club and Car Show draws thousands of people to the south end of Doheny State Beach. More than 100 classic woodie cars are typically on display.



Competitors and photographers alike were in the water at the 2010 Battle for the Paddle at Doheny State Beach. Almost 900 competitors made this two-day event the world's largest stand-up-paddle event. About 7,000 people watched the top athletes compete for a handsome prize.

Special thanks to Lori Coble, Special Event Coordinator, Orange Coast District, California State Parks, for providing the photographs and information on district special events featured in this article.

Special events offer parks high-visibility opportunities

by Eileen Hook, ehook@parks.ca.gov

California parks host special events of all types and sizes, from small intimate weddings to major athletic contests. Families host reunions, corporations sponsor team building experiences, and cultural festivals bring music, art and drama to parks all over the state. A special event shines a spotlight on your site, bringing visitors you may not have attracted otherwise.

Make your park's location a part of the event

There is cachet to having an event at a park. The park has the scenery, location, resources, and facilities to make it a key feature in a special event. The backdrop of a forested hillside, ocean waves or a desert vista adds to the uniqueness of a celebration.

Special events draw new visitors who may return another time to enjoy the other recreation opportunities at the park. The name recognition factor of having your park associated with a successful event helps promote the site for future special events, and for increased regular visitation.

What makes an event a 'special event' at a state park?

The California Code of Regulations Title 14 Section 4301 (j) defines special events as "activities which are beyond the normal scope of activities [including] the exclusive use of an area within the park... when additional staffing or staff time is required, or where items or services are sold."

Personalized attractions can attract visitors

The theme of a special event can draw visitors interested in a particular kind of experience. An event offering activities for people of all ages encourages attendees looking for family fun. A nature based recreation event, such as an annual bird count or a fishing derby, will draw a different crowd. Aficionados of a particular type of music will enjoy a music festival, and beach goers will flock to a surfing event or a stand up paddle board race.

Some events are supported by park partners

Some parks have cooperating associations that work with the paid staff to organize and run special events. Earth Day activities, trail clean up days, jazz festivals, historic reenactments, just about everything imaginable takes place in parks with the help of dedicated volunteers.

Fit events to your park

Only you can assess the capability of your park and staff to host a special event. See page 8 for tips from special event coordinators at parks throughout California. Or perhaps you want to try something different; see the list of links at the bottom of this page for some opportunities. ●

More info about other special events

Food and Wine: Dutch oven cook-off, <http://www.idos.com/index.php>

Family Fun: RV rally, <http://www.your-rv-lifestyle.com/rv-rally.html>

Outdoor Recreation: Hangtown Classic <http://www.hangtownmx.com/>



Hobie Cat sailors from the U.S. and beyond gathered for the start of the Hobie Cat 40th Anniversary Regatta at Doheny State Beach in 2008. The first regatta was held nearby. Video of the event is on the Hobie Cat site at <http://www.hobiecat.com>.



This vintage camping exhibit (inset shows historic camping photo) was part of the 75th anniversary celebration of Doheny State Beach in June 2006. The event, organized by park staff and the Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association, featured the park's history and recreational uses. The celebration included educational presentations, a surfing competition, fishing exhibits, surf music, historical displays, and volleyball demonstrations. See more at the association website, http://dohenystatebeach.org/pg-75th-vlb_slides.htm.

Trails, from page 1.

the Ridge Trail is just over 20 years old. 330 miles are already open to hikers and runners, with over 85% accessible to bikers and equestrians as well.

To expand awareness of the trail and encourage its use, Ridge Trail Council volunteers and park agencies lead an



One of hundreds of volunteers with the REI-Ridge Trail Service Day, in the San Francisco Bay Area, takes a minute to enjoy the view.

array of outings that appeal to diverse users: kid-friendly family events, full multi-use trail events, rides especially for bikers or equestrians, outings to the route's scenic or historic destinations, 'Transit to the Ridge Trail' excursions, and members-only events to thank supporters.

Some events are volunteer work parties, such as the 'REI-Ridge Trail Service Day' held in November, which brings

out hundreds of volunteers to build or maintain the Ridge Trail or improve the adjacent open spaces. Others are fund raisers like the annual 'Ridge to Bridge' in Marin County, where participants enjoy spectacular views of the coast, Bay, and Golden Gate during a day on the trail.

For fundraising events, the Council gives each participant the ability to create their own fundraising page from which they can easily email friends asking for their support. See more at <http://www.ridgetrail.org/>.

Southern and northern California events

A day on a trail can be an occasion to unwind with friends and family, exercise, and enjoy wildlife and scenic panoramas.

At events in southern and northern California, trails provide venues to experience history and the arts, too.

The Southern Overland Trail at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, a potential addition to the national historic trail system, was used by native California Indians, Mexican War and Civil War military expeditions, settlers and stage coaches. Vallecito Days, held each spring by California State Parks, San Diego County Parks, Ramona Trails Association, Back Country Horsemen-San Diego, and Manzanita High Mountain Rendezvous, allows participants to relive those historic days on the trail.

Equestrians participating in the historical re-enactment ride



Hikers celebrate the environment through poetry, art, and dance for Trails and Vistas art hikes in the Sierra Nevada. Photo by Jeff Engerbretson.

along portions of the trail, often dressing in period clothing. State Parks and County Parks deck out the route's Vallecito Stage Station, built before 1857, and open it for tours. The horsemen who fill the county park's equestrian camp, with its corrals and sites for horse trailers, share dinner by lantern light and hear historical talks. This year, Civil War reenactors from Ft. Tejon State Historical Park will join in the pageant.

Sierra Nevada events

In the Sierra Nevada, nonprofit Trails & Vistas presents 'art hikes' on Tahoe-area hiking and riding routes.

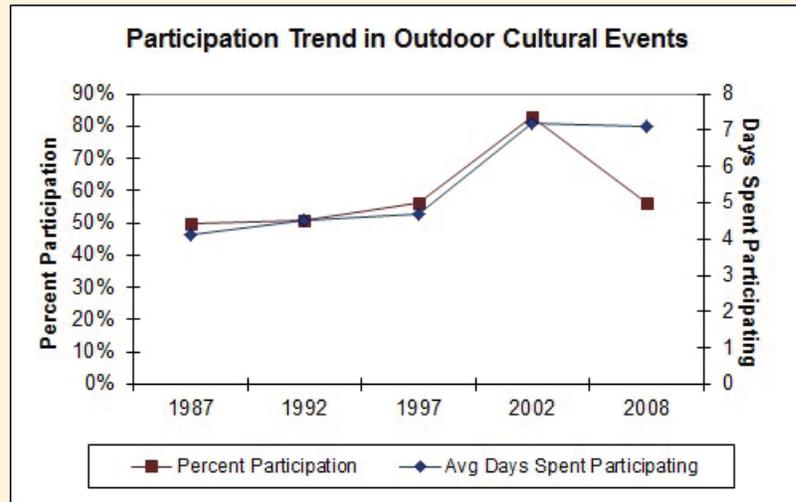
On the hikes, visitors experience dancers, musicians, and other performance artists, and beautiful art installations at performing venues along 2 to 3 miles of trail. Docents guide groups of about 30 hikers through a blend of nature and artistic expression that has included dance ensembles, musicians, poets, visual artists, aerial acrobats, and story tellers. A "Little Feet" hike is included for families, as are "leisure hikes" for people that require a slower pace.

The event raises funds for the Truckee Donner Land Trust and local arts groups. "Our art hikes make the connection between the hiker and the place, and we're doing it through the arts," said Nancy Tieken Lopez, Trails and Vistas' artistic and executive director. ●

Polls show popularity of special events

by Philomene Smith, psmit@parks.ca.gov

Outdoor cultural events continue to be popular among Californians. In the 2008 Survey of Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California (known as SPOA), 56.3% of those surveyed said they attended an outdoor cultural event in the past 12 months.



Participation percentages and days spent participating in outdoor cultural events, 1997-2008, as reported by the 2008 Survey of Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California (SPOA).

Attending outdoor cultural events was the sixth most popular activity out of the more than 40 activities surveyed. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents also said they would like to attend outdoor cultural events more often.

Over 40% of the people who say attending special events is a favorite recreation activity report they are willing to pay about \$16 to \$20 per day for the experience.

Thirty-six percent of the people surveyed in 2008 also said that the state and federal government should place more emphasis on providing more organized activities and special events in public parks and recreation areas.

Data from the SPOA, conducted every five years since 1987, demonstrates the popularity of outdoor cultural events, showing that participation in outdoor cultural events has risen steadily over time. For more SPOA findings, see http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=23880#survey. ●

The California Park Planner
May 2011

Contributors

Stuart Hong
Eileen Hook
Dan Ray
Philomene Smith
Ellie Wagner

Editor

Sara Baldwin
sbaldwin@parks.ca.gov

Web editor

Adrienne Tillis

Contact information

To subscribe or comment, email us at caparkplanner@parks.ca.gov or write us at the Planning Division, California State Parks, P.O. Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001.

Alternate formats available

This publication is available in alternate formats by calling (916) 653-9901, 711 TTY Relay Service.

Planning Division website: <http://www.parks.ca.gov/planning>

Available online

This publication is available at http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21810

© 2011 by California State Parks.



Published twice a year, *The California Park Planner* provides employees of California State Parks and park agencies with information on trends and developments affecting park planning.

TIPS FROM SPECIAL EVENT COORDINATORS

The event's at your park—Now what?

by Eileen Hook, ehook@parks.ca.gov

Here is some advice on special events from special event coordinators we spoke with recently:

Manage crowds. Be aware of and abide by your site's carrying capacity.

Be clear on "who does what." Define who is responsible for security, set up and tear down, and medical emergencies. Additional staffing may be needed in all these areas.

Know about revenue procedures. The State of California requires its departments to recover full costs whenever goods or services are provided for others. All funds above the cost recovery are to be deposited as revenue. The local park districts we contacted use the same procedures.

Agree on the schedule. Have a clear agreement of the event's timeline. Schedules are often tight.

Protect resources. Park managers are responsible for the protection of the park's natural and cultural resources. Monitoring of the impact of the event on the resources is encouraged.

Comply with license, permit requirements. Business licenses are required for sales of merchandise or consumables, an Alcoholic Beverage Commission permit is needed if alcohol will be sold, and proof of insurance should always be required. ●

With special thanks to Scott Reese, Assistant Park and Recreation Director, City of San Diego; Vanessa Garcia, Park Attendant, Riverside County Parks; Mark Mariscal, Superintendent of Operations, Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks; and all the Special Event Coordinators at California State Parks who answered our many questions.



Special-event crowd at a Southern California state park.