

Carmel Area State Parks Virtual Tour

On May 21, 2021, the California State Park and Recreation Commission will consider for approval the Carmel Area State Parks Preliminary General Plan (GP) and Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). Because a public tour of the Carmel Area State Parks has not been possible during the pandemic, the staff of California State Park's Monterey District prepared this virtual tour of Carmel Area State Parks. Enjoy! [Link to Virtual Tour](#)

Transcript of Virtual Tour

Welcome to Point Lobos State Natural Reserve!

I'm Brent Marshall, Monterey District Superintendent.

This video, or virtual tour, you're about to see is a new endeavor for the Monterey District and, in fact, for the Department. As a result of the pandemic, long-distance travel, gathering in large groups, and circulating through some of our park facilities is not feasible. However, in typical state park fashion we have found a way to meet the challenges and continue moving important processes, such as Commission meetings, forward.

During a typical tour, we would bring the Commissioners along with the public to gather in our parks. In many ways, this is the best approach to fully appreciate the natural and cultural resources we protect while providing opportunities for outdoor recreation. Although we will not be able to experience the park in this manner, we hope that this presentation will meet the needs of the Commission as well as take advantage of a new approach. In this tour you'll be able to hear from a number of experts and park partners as they provide insight to their specific areas of interest. You will also be exposed to diverse areas within the parks without having to deal with the logistics of traffic, and travel through the units. I believe the most impactful opportunity that this new format presents is the unique perspective the audience will have with drone footage and satellite imagery. This approach will show how these seemingly separate state parks relate to each other and with other parklands in the region. Thank you for your time and attention to this important process and welcome to your Carmel Area State Parks!

The mission sets the fundamental parameters within which California State Parks acquires and manages its units and program. Public resource code directs unit classifications using information about resources and recreational opportunities. Units being addressed by this General Plan are currently classified as Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, Carmel River State Beach, and two unclassified properties that will become one state park unit.

The regional planning and vision for each unit provide a view of the desired future conditions and desired visitor experience.

Park-wide goals and guidelines are intended to address existing and foreseeable trends or patterns for the long term.

Management zones further define zone-specific goals using a variety of factors unique to the areas.

Future and additional specific projects and management plans will follow adoption of the General Plan. These management plans define the specific objectives and/or designs for accomplishing management goals. Based on staffing and budgets, these may apply to part or all of a unit. Typical examples may be program-level and include: resource management, interpretive plans, road or trails management, concession, and facility, and plans, etc. These plans are detailed; may include: design documents, site plans, may call for specific actions, and may also include an environmental impact review (EIR) for implementation where appropriate. This General Plan contains recommendations for specific management plans including: cultural landscape report, cultural resource management, forest, natural resource and wildfire management plans, historical structure reports, interpretive master plans, multi-modal access and parking management plan, a roads and trails plan, as well as a treatment plan for historical resources. Goals and guidelines for the marine, coastal bluff, and upland reserve zones have been established. All keep in reference the unique zones needs and programmatic impacts. These include preservation and protection of natural, cultural, (and) historical resources, include conservation of biodiversity, water habitats, land habitats, and species; infrastructure, facility uses, visitor management, multi-modal access and parking management, and other measures are also established.

The Carmel Area State Parks General Plan consists of two classified units: Point Lobos State Natural Reserve and Carmel River State Beach and two unclassified properties: the Point Lobos Ranch property and the Hatton Canyon property. The (Point Lobos State Natural) Reserve and Carmel River State Beach will retain their existing classifications, while Hatton Canyon and the Point Lobos Ranch properties will be classified as a new state park. This General Plan will supersede and replace the 1979 General Plan for the (Point Lobos State Natural) Reserve and (Carmel River) State Beach, and is the first General Plan for the Point Lobos Ranch and Hatton Canyon properties.

The unifying theme of the Carmel Area State Parks General Plan consists of a declaration of purpose combined with (park) unit vision statements and goals and guidelines that all seek to achieve a delicate balance required to provide high quality recreational opportunities and resource protection. As parks have become increasingly more popular destination spots, visitor management, parking, and transportation have become more urgent issues. These key issues include overuse of the reserve and managing visitation levels, parking and traffic, and resource protection. The park (general) plan outlines specific management goals and guidelines for natural, cultural, and historical resources with an emphasis on the protection and interpretation of these resources.

Management zones define allowable facilities and activities within sub-areas of the park units, and characterize resource conditions and allowed uses within certain geographical areas. Consideration is given to a variety of factors including topographical features, resource values, ecological parameters, management issues and goals, types and intensities of use, and visitor use.

At Point Lobos, the management strategy is to manage visitation levels and reducing resource impacts by implementing a reservation system to manage visitor capacity and resource protection. This, combined with a multi-modal transportation alternative such as a shuttle system, reduced (amount of) unpaved parking in the reserve, providing parking alternatives in the new state park inland area with shuttle, and working with partnering agencies to reduce Highway 1 parking near the (Point Lobos State Natural) Reserve, are important tools for visitor capacity management and resource protection. Within the reserve, the marine, coastal bluff, and upland zones will be managed to protect and restore sensitive resources while providing high quality recreation opportunities.

The Carmel River State Beach management intent is for the protection of the sensitive natural, historical, and cultural resources while providing coastal-oriented recreation, enhanced public safety on beaches, along with interpretation, enhanced access, and trail linkages to adjacent open space lands. Adaptive management of the existing natural and cultural preserves to reduce resource degradation, while also providing environmentally-compatible trails to enrich visitor experiences, are proposed.

The new state park inland area management zones include the A.M. Allan Ranch Zone, Backcountry Zone, Tatlun Cultural Preserve Zone, the Point Lobos Ridge Natural Preserve Zone, and the San Jose Creek Natural Preserve Zone. The cultural preserve's management focus is on the preservation and interpretation of significant cultural resources. The two natural preserves focus on the majority of the inland area and focus on protecting the unique natural resource values of San Jose Creek and associated riparian habitat and the extensive forested hillsides and ridgeline that include important mountain lion habitat. Historical structures in the A.M. Allan Ranch Zone will be protected, interpreted, and adaptively-reused for visitor use. Visitor access and environmentally-compatible trails, along with parking and park entrance improvements, are proposed. The two natural preserves are proposed to protect globally significant and rare species of Gowen cypress, Monterey pine, maritime chaparral, South-Central California Coast steelhead, California red-legged frog, and Smith's blue butterfly habitat. These resources will be managed and balanced with creating visitor use opportunities, including environmentally-compatible trails, to enrich visitor experiences associated with natural preserves.

Hatton Canyon consists of the upper and lower canyon zones.

The Upper (Hatton) Canyon (Zone) consists of a service road and trail in Monterey pine and oak forest with upland grassland shrub areas. The floor of the canyon has a riparian corridor. The upper canyon will be managed for open space, hiking, and utility road access purposes.

The Lower (Hatton) Canyon (Zone) will be managed for trail use, local and regional special events, and as a regional multi-modal transportation center with alternative transportation modes such as a shuttle system to the reserve and new state park.

Our next section will provide an overview on existing facilities within these four park units. Facilities discussed include roads and trails, utilities and systems, public-serving structures such as restrooms, parking lots, and historic structures. All these examples directly fit into the park-wide vision statement for the Carmel Area (State Parks) General Plan. These facilities are important elements of the park infrastructure. They allow for efficient park management, sustainable operations, and quality visitor services while providing critical support for all other program areas to meet their mission.

The most visited unit within the General Plan is Point Lobos State Natural Reserve. Many of the highlights that attract the visitor are breathtaking scenery and natural landscapes. In order to safely recreate in sensitive protected areas, this infrastructure provides an opportunity for all visitors to enjoy what the (Point Lobos State Natural) Reserve has to offer. Within Point Lobos there are six accessible trails which are some of the most popular trails in the area, with a total of 12 miles in the (Point Lobos State Natural) Reserve. The area adjacent to the main entrance serves as the Park Headquarters. Facilities include offices, a docent center, and staff residences. The maintenance storage yard is the primary location for equipment used for operations in the Reserve. There are five restroom facilities which are strategically located around trailheads, parking lots, and picnic areas.

In Carmel River State Beach there are two restrooms - one near the Carmel River Lagoon and a restroom at the southern end of Monastery Beach. Multiple trail networks and a main service road provide access through the (park) unit.

Point Lobos Ranch property is currently closed to the public. Several historic ranch structures within Point Lobos Ranch serve as maintenance facilities and staff housing. This area is also used as the main maintenance shops for the Monterey District Road and Trail Crew and Historic Restoration Crew, as well as a camp for multiple youth Corps (which) has proven beneficial for park units throughout the District. In the San Jose Creek canyon area, there is a maintenance shop, staff residences, and the San Jose Creek trail - once open - will provide critical connection to nearby park units.

In Hatton Canyon there are no developed recreational structures within the property. However, an unpaved service road provides critical access to public utilities and is used as a trail. Recreational facilities within the southern portion of the property include a paved accessible multi-use trail as well as a picnic area with benches.

Planning For The Future – Facilities

Develop and maintain environmentally-compatible and facility improvements to meet visitor, staff, and park management needs and to support seamless operations. Sustainable and efficient resource use, and adequate utilities and infrastructure, are critical to effective management. Important utility constraints have been identified including water supply and disposal capacity. Repair, upgrade, and develop adequate infrastructure for efficient use of energy, water, and other resources. Upgrade utilities and infrastructure that are critical for park use, management, and needed to support planned operations. Develop or assess adaptive use for existing facilities that will improve park operations.

Recreational trails are developed to provide access to the natural, cultural, and scenic resources of a park and to provide opportunities for varied forms of recreation. This holistic vision recognizes that visitors see the units as fitting together, sharing elements of the same Central Coast landscape. The sustainability of the alignments and design of authorized trails will guide trail management into the future. Prepare a road and trail management plan in coordination with local and regional parks and open space partners which will evaluate the parks' entire trail system. The plan will recognize future landscape-scale network opportunities to connect trails with adjacent zones. Enhance, maintain, and provide accessible trails where appropriate. Identify locations where decommissioning and restoration of unauthorized trails are needed to decrease erosion, soil compaction, and degradation of cultural and natural resources.

Sustainability. Integrate and employ sustainability practices and principles in all aspects of park facilities, programs, and operations. Utilize modern sustainability standards, such as ways to reduce energy and maximize the use of energy-efficient products and materials. These standards have been developed to promote environmentally-healthy design, construction, and maintenance practices. Continue to utilize low- or zero-emission vehicles for park operations and maintenance equipment, which will reduce air quality impacts and promote energy efficiency within the park units.

Public safety concerns vary between the different Carmel rea state park units but generally include visitor safety situations such as aquatic incidents, beach and bluff hazards, trails with steep slopes in cliff areas, pedestrians along State Route 1, and responding to various criminal activity such as auto

burglaries, illegal camping, and illegal fires. The shoreline at Carmel River State Beach, in particular at the southern end of the beach unit named Monastery Beach, is known for its steep beach leading to an offshore underwater canyon. Strong rip currents and cold water, with occasional sleeper waves, have caused deaths over the years. Despite the dangers, Monastery Beach continues to be a popular destination as the beach and parking access are very visible to people traveling on State Route 1. California State Parks has implemented various actions to improve aquatic safety through visitor education, patrols by lifeguards and rangers, the addition of a lifeguard tower, and split rail fencing to identify access points (and) where (safety information) signs are posted. Scuba diving is a popular recreational component of both Carmel River State Beach and Point Lobos State Natural Reserve. While this activity is inherently dangerous in and of itself, the cold water, deep Carmel Submarine Canyon, and thick kelp forest make these locations more dangerous than other locations in Monterey County.

Visitors to Point Lobos State Natural Reserve and Carmel River State Beach often choose to park their cars on the State Route 1 shoulder, within the Caltrans right-of-way. When doing this, pedestrian risks can arise from walking along the shoulder which is very narrow in some areas, and crossing the busy highway on foot. There have been many incidents and close calls with visitors and children running across the highway between vehicles.

With the trend of high visitation and immense popularity, public safety will continue to be a top priority of California State Parks. Facility design and visitor management strategies must address known and other potential safety needs. Visitor safety communication methods, including the use of social media, along with site-specific solutions, will continue to be identified and evaluated. California State Parks will also continue to coordinate with other public entities in response to public safety emergencies, and training. Providing adequate staffing for public safety and emergency incidents will remain a high priority.

I'd like to show you some of the incredible natural resources, as well as some of the impacts to those resources occurring in the Carmel area state park units and presented in the General Plan. The Carmel area state park units comprise numerous habitat communities including beaches and intertidal areas, coastal bluffs, riparian and redwood forests, grasslands and coastal prairies, freshwater lagoon, coastal scrub, maritime chaparral, and Monterey cypress and pine forests. Wildlife abounds in these state park units and they include many sensitive species such as the California red-legged frog, the South-Central California Coast steelhead, numerous marine mammals and shorebirds, Smith's blue butterfly, and mountain lions just to name a few.

Protection and management of natural resources is a critical issue. In fact, natural resource management goals and guidelines form the heart of the General Plan's direction, as these ecologically-significant areas contribute to high-quality visitor experiences. Managing visitor use is critical for the protection and perpetuation of the diverse vegetation and wildlife species that call these park units home. The flora, fauna, and ecosystems of these units need to be restored, protected, interpreted, and managed in balance with visitor use opportunities. With this General Plan, we will implement management actions using proven ecological principles and professionally-accepted methods to restore, maintain, and enhance populations, to identify and limit access to important breeding and rearing areas during marine mammal and shorebird breeding and rearing periods, protect aquatic habitat occupied by special status species, reduce and eliminate wildlife access to human food and garbage, minimize human-induced disturbance and degradation of natural areas, and restore wildlife habitat. We will also

maintain healthy forest stands by implementing forest management practices to include reducing stand density and increasing understory diversity. We will continue to mitigate the risk of wildfire by removing an over-abundance of fuels, and work with the neighboring property owners on defensible space practices. The Carmel Area State Parks make up some of the most beautifully-diverse landscapes in the world. Our goal is to protect and sustain the natural features and ecological processes so that they can be enjoyed by visitors for generations to come.

The area encompassing Point Lobos and the lower San Jose Creek drainage has been known for centuries to the native Rumsen and Esselen people as Ishxenta. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, it was an important village dating back at least two thousand years. To the Rumsen and Esselen people today, it is a sacred place. The mouth of San Jose Creek lies at the heart of Ishxenta. It is where the Portolá expedition first encountered the Rumsen people in 1769, and today there are significant archaeological resources present. We have proposed to set aside a 24-acre parcel in this area as a cultural preserve to honor the area's native heritage and historic significance, and to protect the sensitive cultural resources there. The proposed name, Tatlun Cultural Preserve, honors Tatlun, who at the time of European contact was the headman of the five main Rumsen villages and who made his home here at Ishxenta.

Point Lobos Ranch, a crossroads of history! Today, Point Lobos contains a variety of historic structures, features, and landscapes. A proposed historic district encompasses a dairy that operated during the early 20th century, residences from a late 19th century subdivision, fields, pastures, as well as many other components of a rural historic landscape. What is now Point Lobos Ranch became part of the lands of Carmel Mission and later were part of the Mexican land grant Rancho San José y Sur Chiquito. By the mid-19th century, a truly multi-ethnic community developed in what was called Carmelo, or Point Carmel. The Chinese fishing colony emerged, during which the so-called Whaler's Cabin was built. Azorean whalers arrived in the 1860s, who later started the first dairies in the area. Rumsen, Anglo settlers, Californios, and later Japanese, Italians, Mexicans all came to add to the community. After a coal mine was established nearby, Whaler's Cove became the shipping point for products such as granite, lumber, potatoes, barley, and cheese. A proposed housing development was created called Carmelito. Engineer and contractor A.M. Allan purchased the mine and part of the development, moving his family here. He partnered with Gennosuke Kodani to harvest abalone in the bay. Kodani recruited experienced Japanese divers, and together they formed Point Lobos Canyon Company, centered in what is now Whaler's Cove. Allan also established the Point Lobos Dairy, learning how to make cheese from his Azorean neighbors. Today, this area is used for a variety of important park functions such as residences, (work)shops, and maintenance activities. Despite previous attempts at development, the area's natural beauty was recognized, and by the 1920s efforts were underway to protect Point Lobos. It was finally set aside as a State Reserve in 1933. Other important historic resources can be found in San Jose Creek Canyon and the Odello property, together offering tangible reminders of the area's rich multi-ethnic agricultural legacy.

This is so beautiful! The stunning landscapes of the Carmel Area State Parks have inspired humans for thousands of years, beginning with the indigenous tribes who inhabited this land, followed by ranchers, fishermen, poets, artists, and others from varied walks of life and backgrounds.

The goal for interpretation at the Carmel Area State Parks is to provide inspiration to our visitors through interpretive exhibits, tours, and programs that offer welcoming, accessible, and personally-meaningful experiences that facilitate recreational enjoyment, visitor safety, cultural and natural

resource appreciation, along with an understanding of California State Parks management goals. It's our hope that the interpretive experience of the Carmel Area State Parks will inspire our visitors to become active participants in the ongoing preservation of these awe-inspiring places they came to enjoy, by taking home a message on the importance of resource conservation as a lifestyle. Point Lobos State Natural Reserve has been a leader in this effort.

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve's rich history of protection and conservation serves as a guiding force in the interpretation of one of the crown jewels of the California state park system. Interpretation revolves around two forests - one on land, the Monterey pine and the Monterey cypress forest, and the other in the ocean, the giant kelp forest. The meeting of these two forests lends itself to a multitude of interpretive opportunities designed to enhance our visitor's experience. One such opportunity is the Point Lobos PORTS program, a K-12 distance learning program that uses the educational potential of live video-conferencing to help schools teach Common Core State Standards in the context of California State Parks. Students go on a virtual kayak adventure to learn about ways that we protect the ocean. They have the opportunity to explore the giant kelp forest and examine how a unique history of resource protection has made Point Lobos a protected oasis of biodiversity. As students experience one of California's first underwater state reserves, they observe and discover interesting and important animal life in their natural habitat. They also interact with a park interpreter - asking questions, making new connections, and building upon their own curiosity, as this program strives to empower and inspire the present and future stewards of Point Lobos and beyond.

Hello and welcome to the Point Lobos State Natural Reserve! I'm Karin Stratton, President of the Point Lobos Foundation (PLF) Board of Directors, a non-profit cooperating association that supports Point Lobos State Natural Reserve.

And I'm Kathleen Lee, Executive Director for the Point Lobos Foundation, founded in 1978 as the Point Lobos Natural History Association. Over the 43 years our mission has evolved, yet we remain passionate in our support of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve and as a cooperating association in our partnership with California State Parks.

Over 250 state park's volunteer docents work over 31,000 hours a year in our model volunteer program. Docents provide a robust interpretation program, lead classroom and school visits within the reserve, and provide the hands-on work for the habitat restoration program. Point Lobos Foundation provides all of the funding for this program which we believe is a key component of why so many visitors love their trip to Point Lobos.

The (Point Lobos) Foundation is proud of our loyal members, over 800 who support these programs within the (Point Lobos State Natural) Reserve. We also have strong support from grant organizations and key community organizations that provide critical funding to complement the State Park's budget. The (Point Lobos) Foundation also provides direct financial support to California State Parks to annually fund ecology positions and trail maintenance within the (Point Lobos State Natural) Reserve.

The Point Lobos Foundation also supports the PORTS program by providing equipment such as a kayak, wetsuit, and camera for our amazing interpreter Daniel Williford, to introduce the wonder of the kelp forest to students from throughout California.

To ensure that all visitors can enjoy the (Point Lobos State Natural) Reserve, docents created the Easy Access Program so visitors with mobility issues can share in the Reserve experience. Our members also support important capital projects within the Reserve, from preserving Whaler's Cabin, to working with (California) State Parks to rehabilitate trails, and creating and designing a new trail such as the ADA-accessible Lace Lichen Trail.

To date, the Point Lobos Foundation has raised over \$2.5 million in direct support of the Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, and have been a vital partner to California State Parks in applying for grants to further support projects and programs within the Reserve. We are delighted to have the California (State) Parks (and Recreation) Commission being poised to adopt and approve the General Plan for the four Carmel Area State Parks. The Foundation strongly supports the concepts of managing visitor use to preserve the unique natural resources of the Reserve to ensure that future generations of Californians can continue to enjoy this beautiful majestic jewel.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Point Lobos Foundation, we thank you for virtually visiting our favorite of the California State Parks and we hope that you have an opportunity to see the dramatic coastline vistas, our cypress trees, and pine forest in person.

A General Plan is the primary management document for a park. It defines a framework for resource stewardship, interpretation, facilities, visitor use, and operations. Because a General Plan can be in effect for 20 years or more, it must be flexible enough to accommodate expected future changes.

The purpose of the Carmel Area State Parks is to provide public access to the Central Coast of California and the recreational opportunities offered by its waters, shoreline, beach, inland areas, and adjacent community setting. Subject to high year-round visitor demand, preserving the rich natural scenic and cultural resources is a delicate balance achieved through innovative adaptive management strategies. For example, the General Plan identifies visitor management as a critical component of protecting the natural and cultural resources in these parklands and preserving the visitor experience. However, the General Plan will not specifically outline projects and strategies to accomplish this. Forest health is a high priority for these parklands, but the scale and scope of specific projects will not be detailed in the General Plan. The General Plan identifies utilities and facilities that are at the end of their life, but it will not provide specifications needed for code compliance and utility improvements. Each of these projects and management plans will take separate levels of approval. These complex processes require their own analysis and specific level of detail, their own set of control agency approvals, and their own budget and timeline. For that reason, these projects will be detailed in separate documents that will follow after the General Plan is approved.

Approving the Carmel Area State Parks General Plan will provide the Monterey District staff and partners an opportunity to develop management plans and projects that preserve the extraordinary biological diversity, protect our most valued natural and cultural resources, and provide opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. On behalf of the Monterey District, I would like to thank our partners, community groups, tribes, allied agencies, and stakeholders for their continued involvement in this process. This General Plan captures, to the fullest extent possible, their comments and feedback. As we celebrate arriving at this benchmark, the approval of the Carmel Area State Parks General Plan, we also look forward to continued conversations with all of these groups as we formulate projects and management plans that will continue to improve protection of these precious resources while enhancing the visitor experience. Thank You.