



### Chapter 3

# ISSUES AND ANALYSIS



## 3 ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

This chapter identifies the planning assumptions that, along with the California State Parks (CSP) mission, underpin the General Plan. Following the assumptions are descriptions and analyses of key issues to be addressed by the plan's goals and guidelines in Chapter 4.

### 3.1 Planning Assumptions

The following assumptions are based on current state and federal laws, regulations, and CSP policy. These assumptions form the planning context and set the parameters for addressing general planning issues.

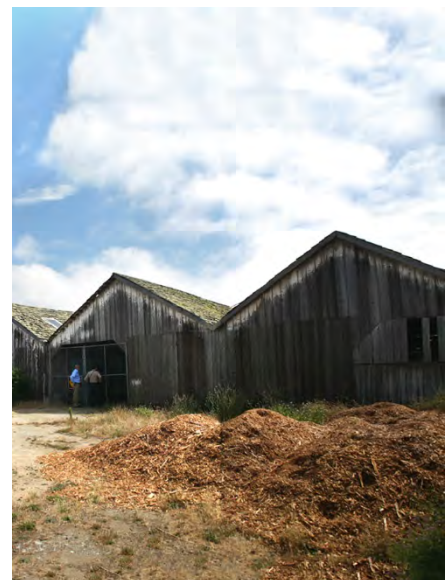
CSP will do the following:

- Manage and protect rare, threatened, and endangered species and sensitive natural plant communities and wildlife habitats, including the marine, coastal, and inland resources, as required by federal and state laws, and by CSP's mission.
- Protect the rich prehistoric cultural resources and sites that occur within each of the park units. Consult with California Native American Tribes to obtain a mutually respectful understanding of the long-term needs for protection and treatment of heritage and sacred sites, objects, or human remains, as well as to define future consultations that would be required during subsequent planning, design, and project implementation.
- Preserve the park's cultural resources, including all identified archaeological or historic properties, which may be districts, landscapes, sites, buildings, features and objects, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Continue to adapt to the changing climate, including anticipation of sea level rise and increase in wildfire risk over time.
- Work with state, regional, and local agencies and with non-governmental organization partners on inter-jurisdictional matters, such as transportation solutions in the State Route (SR) 1 corridor, regional transportation hub parking, regional trail connections, wildfire risk reduction and response, and management of the Carmel River and lagoon environs.



**California State Parks' Mission:**  
 "To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation."

For descriptions of current unit classifications, see Section 1.8, Planning Hierarchy (1.8.2 Classification). Section 4.1, Classification, outlines the classification decisions included in the plan for the two existing units and two unclassified properties.



Example of important historic resources, the Odello Farm buildings at the State Beach

See Interagency and Stakeholder Involvement in Chapter 1 for a summary of the public process used to engage the public throughout the planning process.

- Plan for transportation options and visitor facilities that resolve parking issues in the units.
- Emphasize enhancement of the visitor experience, which will include management of recreation opportunities among the units to reduce excessive visitation that results in the degradation of sensitive resources.
- Maintain ongoing, open communication with the surrounding community and seek input regarding plan implementation from local, regional, and statewide interests.
- Coordinate planning efforts between state parks and other public park and open space areas managed by Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD), U.S. Forest Service, Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT), City of Carmel, and Monterey County to evaluate and enhance connectivity and compatibility of recreation and interpretive opportunities and resource management programs.

## 3.2 Carmel Area State Parks Issues

The key issues that influenced the planning effort for the Carmel Area State Parks (CASP) units are discussed below. These issues are parkwide, because multiple units are affected, but also have implications for individual units or areas. The General Plan addresses these issues through the parkwide management goals and guidelines, which are presented in Chapter 4, Park Plan. Several, area-specific issues are also discussed in Section 3.3.

### 3.2.1 Visitor Capacity Management

Visitor overuse in sensitive resource areas can damage park resources and diminish the quality of visitor experiences. Overuse is an acute concern at the Reserve because of the richness of its iconic natural, cultural, and scenic resources and the extremely high demand for visitation. A 2016 survey of the coastal bluffs of the Reserve documented substantial trail degradation, creation of unauthorized trails, areas of soil and vegetation loss, and disturbance of marine wildlife (Noble 2016). Visitor management needs to take into account how to achieve sustainable uses in the Reserve, as well as the other units, whereby resource degradation can be prevented.



The 1979 General Plan estimated the capacity of the Reserve based on available parking spaces: 150 spaces x 3 persons per vehicle = 450 people maximum at one time. Assuming three parking space turnovers per day, the daily carrying capacity equaled 1,350 persons.

The appropriate visitor capacity of the Reserve has been a topic of both CSP management focus and public input for decades. Because of the national and international renown of the Reserve, large numbers of annual visitors and many peak-visitation days occur every year. The high level of visitor use continues to damage sensitive marine and coastal natural resources and cultural resources within the Reserve. The 1979 General Plan related the Reserve carrying capacity to a parking facility-capacity-based calculation of 450 visitors at one time, based on a vehicle parking capacity of 150 spaces and an average of three people per vehicle. Using an estimated parking lot turnover of three times per day, the daily facility carrying capacity was noted to be 1,350 visitors per day. The calculation did not attempt to correlate the parking lot capacity to resource impacts, visitor behavior, visitor destination, or visitor experience, but noted the importance of monitoring resource degradation and adapting management responses accordingly.

Currently, there is limited reliable data on total visitor attendance at the Reserve, because many visitors park on the highway and walk in to avoid the entrance fee or because parking inside the Reserve has been filled to capacity. Even with the limited data available, it is clear that the Reserve exceeds its visitor capacity. It is estimated that 400,000 visitors walked into the Reserve in 2016. Because of its State Natural Reserve unit classification, management priority is directed to protect important resources, and CSP staff need a sustainable use strategy to monitor, account for, and adaptively manage the unit to minimize resource degradation.

CSP is currently working with the Point Lobos Foundation (PLF) to fence trails to keep people on designated paths, placing interpretive and educational signs near sensitive areas to inform visitors why it is important to protect such resources, and restoring coastal bluffs to re-establish habitat that has been lost due to human foot traffic.

Overuse and the need for sustainable visitor management are not issues that only apply to the Reserve. Current and planned uses of all of the publicly open CASP units, including the impacts of special events on the park's sensitive resources, are ongoing issues. Resource degradation has occurred within the Ohlone Coastal Cultural Preserve at the State Beach due to visitor overuse and special events. Visitor use management at Point Lobos Ranch will need to consider protection of areas with Natural and Cultural Preserve designations. Key considerations are visitor management at each of the CASP units to maintain the resource integrity and desired visitor experience. Special events should be evaluated with regard to regional opportunities for these events, the consistency with CSP's mission, and the purpose and vision of the park.



Park visitors painting and using Reserve trails



Interpretive display at Whalers Cove

Among the potential strategies to be explored to maintain sustainable use is implementation of CSP's reservation system. Day use reservations could be required at one or more units (particularly the Reserve), operated continuously (annually) or during peak use periods (seasonally, holidays), coordinated with docent-led tours or self-guided visits, and implemented with digital and internet applications for convenience. Reservation software, web applications, and connection to mobile phones have substantially advanced and diversified opportunities for reservation systems in the last few years. The CSP reservation system offers additional opportunities for advances in reservation system planning to support sustainable use.

Another strategy to maintain sustainable use includes charging a day use fee for walk-in visitors should SR I parking not be removed. When a reservation and shuttle system is implemented, walk-in fees could be eliminated because park entry would require a reservation.

## 3.2.2 Resource Protection

Key parkwide resource protection issues include balancing park use with resource protection, climate change adaptation, water quality, and water supply.

### Balancing Park Use with Resource Protection

CSP must take the needs of the native flora and fauna, sensitive habitats, the natural processes and functions that support sensitive aquatic and terrestrial communities, and important cultural resource sensitivity into full account when defining approaches to manage the recreational and operational needs of the park units. Where a unit classification is a State Natural Reserve, or where a natural or cultural preserve has been established, management priority is assigned to resource protection. With a state park or state beach classification, management considerations seek to balance resource protection and high-quality recreational objectives.

There are rare plant communities and endangered species that provide unique opportunities for education and research; however, research must be compatible with CSP's mandate to protect these resources for future generations. Research also takes place in the marine reserve, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) issues collection permits for certain species. There are opportunities to review and clarify policies for issuing collection permits and scientific research permits for all CASP units to ensure long-term sustainability of the processes.



Tidepools at the Reserve



In addition to protecting rare, threatened and endangered species, CSP must also address management of invasive and nonnative species in the park units. PLF will continue to map and eradicate nonnative invasive plant species within the Reserve, including cape ivy, poison hemlock, Harding grass, fireweed, velvet grass, and sea fig. California Native Plant Society (CNPS) will continue to eradicate French broom at Point Lobos Ranch.

Mapping the sensitive natural and cultural resources should occur prior to implementing park improvement projects to better assure sensitive resources are avoided or minimally impacted, are documented, and monitored over time. CSP and PLF continue to partner on a long-term wildlife disturbance research effort to inform park managers on how to minimize wildlife/human conflicts within the Reserve. Other studies include assessing small mammals within the coastal prairie meadows of the Reserve.

CSP and the PLF have also initiated a research program that looks at the Reserve's resource base and makes recommendations on how to reduce sediment delivery to the Area of Special Biological Significance (ASBS). As a result of this research, CSP has implemented south shore bluff restoration projects. CSP will continue research to gather needed resource data to help park managers make informed resource management decisions.

There is a continuing need for habitat restoration and CSP anticipates future restoration at Lower Sea Lion Point, Coal Chute Point, and Granite Point, among other places.

There is a need to balance educational and recreational uses and park management with the preservation and protection of the many historic and prehistoric resources in the parks. The Reserve, the State Beach, and Point Lobos Ranch all contain significant historic and prehistoric resources. Cultural and sacred sites important to Native people exist in the units. There are opportunities for CSP to protect these resources, while providing for high-quality outdoor recreation, interpretation, and education for visitors.

## Climate Change Adaptation

It is anticipated that climate change will cause ecological stressors, resource and property damage, and public safety risks in the coastal areas in California. Possible climate impacts include: increased temperatures of up to 6°F higher than the current average temperatures by 2100; precipitation changes of 4 to 8 inches less in annual rainfall by 2100; sea level rise up to 55 inches higher than current sea levels by 2100; reduced agricultural



Gowen cypress at Point Lobos Ranch

Ecological stressors refer to any physical, chemical, or biological constraint on the productivity of a given species and development of ecosystems.

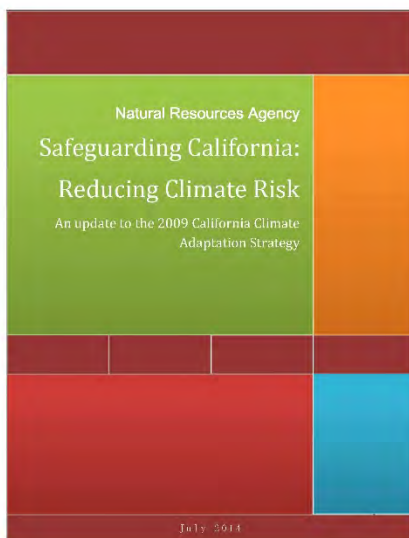
activity; biodiversity threats; loss of natural and cultural resources, shoreline retreat, facilities, and infrastructure due to erosion; public health threats; and increased wildfire risks of up to 100 percent by 2085. In the CASP units, sea level rise is the most apparent climate risk, but increased wildfire risk, changes in storms, flooding risk, and ecological responses will also be of concern. Planning must include adaptation to the changing climate, as well as consideration for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Regarding sea level rise, the California Climate Change Adaptation Policy Guide prepared by the California Emergency Management Agency and California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) estimated that the entire coastal zone is susceptible to sea level rise, including beaches, bluffs, bays, and estuaries. While sea level rise predictions vary based on future GHG emissions scenarios, the most commonly used prediction for planning purposes is 1.41 meters by 2100. This prediction is included in the 2017 version of Cal-Adapt, the state's internet climate adaptation tool, administered by CNRA and the California Energy Commission.

The 2009 California Climate Change Adaptation Strategy adopted six adaptation strategies for ocean and coastal resources that are important to address when planning for CASP. The six adaptation strategies laid out by the Coastal Adaptation Working Group, including CSP, are:

- Strategy 1: Establish State Policy to Avoid Future Hazards and Protect Critical Habitat;
- Strategy 2: Provide Statewide Guidance for Protecting Existing Critical Ecosystems, Existing Coastal Development, and Future Investments;
- Strategy 3: State Agencies Should Prepare Sea Level Rise and Climate Adaptation Plans;
- Strategy 4: Support Regional and Local Planning for Addressing Sea Level Rise Impacts;
- Strategy 5: Complete a Statewide Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment Every Five Years; and
- Strategy 6: Support Essential Data Collection and Information Sharing.

In 2014, CNRA published Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk as an update to the 2009 Adaptation Strategy. The 2014 report includes an Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems and Resources chapter



2014 Safeguarding California Report

with an update of sea level rise and other risk information. For sea level rise, it continues to rely on projections from a 2009 Pacific Institute study commissioned by the state that has been cited by most agencies with purview over coastal lands or resources.

CNRA updated the 2014 Safeguarding California report in 2018. A key component of the update is consideration of revised sea level rise predictions. In 2017, the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) compiled updated science findings to indicate that predictions for sea level in 2100 will be higher than previously expected, because of an increased rate of ice sheet melt in Greenland and Antarctica. Ice sheet melt will overtake thermal expansion and glacial melt as the major source of long-term future sea level rise. In a 2017 Science Report, OPC describes the updated sea level rise predictions for the California coast that will be used to modify state agency guidance for addressing sea level rise. Sea level rise predictions will continue to evolve as understanding of ocean warming and ice-melt dynamics improves.

Together, the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets contain more than 99% of the freshwater ice on Earth (National Snow and Ice Data Center 2017).

CSP has developed a Sea Level Rise and Extreme Event Guidance document (CSP 2017) that includes recommendations for addressing sea level rise at California state parks located on the coast. This document anticipates effects to coastal park units resulting from the following:

- Inundation of significant cultural and natural resources;
- loss of beach area and width;
- accelerated bluff erosion;
- damage to park facilities and infrastructure owned by CSP and others;
- decreased public access;
- altered recreational opportunities; and
- change in revenue generation opportunities.

The projected increase in sea level and extreme events justifies the need for a careful evaluation of the potential vulnerabilities to and effects of flooding, inundation, and erosion on CSP's coastal resources.

The guidance document describes how proposed projects in the coastal zone would be evaluated, including anticipated level of sea rise, coastal storm surge, and extreme event potential impacts.



However, decisions will also be based on park unit needs and other local and statewide considerations. Given the level of uncertainty regarding the timing of anticipated sea level rise and extreme events, the document recommends planning for the worst-case scenario and provides tools and resources to inform decisions and to identify, document, and manage vulnerabilities early in the project management and planning process.

CSP will plan for management of sensitive natural and cultural resources along the coast to minimize damage or record information from locations that are infeasible to protect in areas that are prone to near-term inundation or storm-wave runup, such as at the State Beach, where cultural resources within the Ohlone Coastal Cultural Preserve would be vulnerable to increased coastal erosion.

## Water Quality

The primary water resources in the CASP units include the ocean (including bays and coves), Gibson Creek, San Jose Creek, and the Carmel River. Groundwater in the area primarily occurs in unconfined deposits in alluvial material. Water quality in the Carmel River lagoon varies throughout the year, and is driven by changes in local weather, lagoon volume, stream flow, wave and tidal conditions, California American Water (CalAm) water usage, and whether the sandbar separating the river from the ocean is open or closed. During dry months, dissolved oxygen and temperature are managed to maintain water quality for south-central California coast steelhead habitat by augmenting lagoon water via an aerator using groundwater from a well near SR I. Sediment and pollutant discharge to marine water is also a critical issue, recognizing the presence of a designated ASBS and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Potential point sources of pollution to the streams in the park units include the Carmel Area Wastewater District (CAWD) wastewater treatment plant and existing package treatment plants located to the north of the Reserve and the State Beach. Package treatment plants are small on-site treatment plants designed to handle specific needs. Treated wastewater effluent from the CAWD plant is discharged into Carmel Bay through a pipeline that passes through the State Beach. Effluent from the two package treatment plants is discharged into the open ocean north of the Reserve.

Runoff from SR I is concentrated and conveyed in a series of corrugated metal pipes, with the outfall being conveyed through the pine forest in the Reserve, and discharged into Whalers Cove.



Carmel River — south-central California coast steelhead and California red-legged frog habitat

Package plants are pre-manufactured treatment facilities used to treat wastewater in small communities or on individual properties. Package plants are designed to treat flows as low as 0.002 MGD or as high as 0.5 MGD (EPA 2000).

This runoff has caused erosion and silt flows into Whalers Cove impacting ocean water clarity. Runoff from the Whalers Cove parking lot is conveyed down the boat ramp and into the ocean contributing sediment and pollutants to the ASBS. The south shore unpaved parking lots also contribute sediment to the ASBS as noted by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). The SWRCB has identified these areas as point sources in need of pre-treatment prior to being discharged to the ASBS.

Soils in Hatton Canyon have high erosion potential that likely contribute sediment runoff to the seasonal creek. The existing unpaved service road within Hatton Canyon also causes water quality issues including sedimentation. The ephemeral creek can inundate the sewer manholes in the canyon, resulting in sewer spills into the creek.

Following the Soberanes fire in 2016, high levels of sedimentation have been observed in San Jose Creek. A few bank erosion sites, roads, and road crossings contribute to the fine sediment in the creek. Siltation of San Jose Creek has increased since the Soberanes fire which exposed soils within the watershed.

Groundwater within Point Lobos Ranch is primarily within the San Jose Creek aquifer. Saltwater intrusion is occasionally a problem for groundwater in this area. Salt water has been found in wells when dug to certain depths.

Maintaining and improving water quality in all CASP units is an ongoing consideration. Opportunities also exist for enhancing water quality by reducing sedimentation through improved trail and road design.

## Water Supply

It has been determined that the Carmel River groundwater basin is in an overdraft condition, leading to reduced river levels. Water is in short supply in the Monterey Peninsula area. The Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD) expects a water supply gap of up to 7,000-acre feet per year by 2021. Although MPWMD, CalAm, and other agencies are working on projects to increase water supply, it is expected that water supply constraints will be an ongoing issue in the community, including for CASP water needs, for the foreseeable future. CSP has been informed that no new water supplies are available for additional development. To provide an ongoing water supply for existing and new uses, CSP must become more efficient in how its existing water allocation will be used. Water efficiency and conservation guidelines for all units and all future park uses are an ongoing need.



Carmel River marsh at the State Beach

Aquatic and riparian habitats have been severely affected by the past diversions from the Carmel River and ongoing groundwater overdraft. There have been efforts to maintain the riparian vegetation along the river through irrigation in dry months and to prevent south-central California coast steelhead deaths by fish relocations. Significant opportunities exist for CSP to continue working with CalAm and MPWMD to manage the habitat needs within those portions of the Carmel River watershed that are in their jurisdiction and also continue as a partner in larger scale watershed planning efforts, as appropriate.

### 3.2.3 Circulation, Access, and Parking

Parkwide issues related to circulation, parking, and pedestrian access include vehicle access, parking adequacy, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and universal access. Currently, the vast majority of visitors rely on personal autos as the primary transportation mode to reach the Reserve and State Beach. SR 1 can become congested during periods of substantial visitation to the Monterey area.

#### Park Unit Access

Public access to the CASP units raises a number of issues, with long-established, well-developed circulation, parking, and pedestrian facilities serving the Reserve and State Beach, and the need to develop new facilities on acquired but not yet opened property (i.e., Point Lobos Ranch). Public access decisions are influenced by CSP's mission to provide both high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities and protection of the most valuable natural and cultural resources, as well as to meet the California Coastal Act requirement for maximum public access to the coastal zone (California Coastal Act, PRC Section 30210).

Public access to the Reserve is directly from SR 1, by turning onto Point Lobos Road. There is also a private entrance to the Reserve that provides access to the Hudson House (currently used as a park staff residence). The primary access issue for the Reserve is that more visitors arrive than can be accommodated with the available onsite Reserve parking. This leads to extensive parking along SR 1 outside the Reserve for walk-in visitors and visitors who want to park outside the Reserve to avoid the day use parking fee, traffic backing up onto SR 1 from the main access road, congestion along the highway corridor, and potential pedestrian safety issues.

The State Beach can be accessed from the parking lot on Scenic Road, a small parking lot adjacent to Bay School, and at Monastery Beach off SR 1. There are also walk-in access points adjacent to



Hudson House on the northern portion of the Reserve



the Bay School, via a driveway at Odello Farm, and via the service road/trail. CAWD, City of Carmel, BSLT, and CSP have also explored the potential for installing a foot bridge across the Carmel River near the northeast corner of the CAWD plant to facilitate public access from the City of Carmel to the State Beach and the Odello West field. This river crossing trail could be included in a coastal access trail alignment.

While the Point Lobos Ranch property is not open for public access, intersections exist with SR 1 at existing roadways. San Jose Creek Canyon Road provides access to the northern portion of Point Lobos Ranch. Red Wolf Drive and Riley Ranch Road provide access to the upper elevations. Homeowners on Red Wolf Drive have voiced concern about public access to Point Lobos Ranch that would allow visitor use of Riley Ranch Road and Red Wolf Drive due to concerns about loss of privacy, trespass, access, and heightened fire danger associated with public use.

Hatton Canyon can be accessed by pedestrians at the south and north ends, as well as from neighboring properties. There is a paved bike path in the southern portion of the property, accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists from SR 1, Carmel Valley Road, and the adjacent shopping centers. Residential neighbors have opposed increasing public access to the northern end of the property due to concerns about loss of privacy and potential fire hazards associated with public use.

CSP has created parking facilities and trails that are accessible according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) primarily in the Reserve, plus three visitor parking spaces at the State Beach parking lot off Scenic Road. There is potential to continue to improve ADA access where visitor facilities are developed on Point Lobos Ranch and at the Odello Farm area in the State Beach.

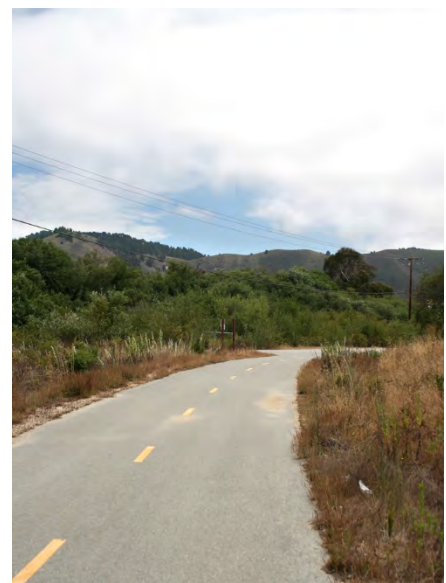
## Parking Locations in the Units

Adequate, safe, and well-located parking has been an ongoing management issue for the Reserve and the Monastery Beach area. The location of some parking areas contributes to increased degradation of natural and cultural resources, such as unpaved parking areas in the Reserve. Other parking areas, such as the State Beach parking lot off Scenic Road, has already been subject to inundation and erosion.

The Reserve contains approximately 150 public parking spaces for visitors in several parking areas (plus additional accessible parking and staff parking). Some of the parking near coastal bluffs is on unpaved surfaces or is close to sensitive cultural resource sites



CAWD force main crossing the Carmel River lagoon



Hatton Canyon multi-purpose trail



Parking along SR 1 at Monastery Beach



Carmel River Beach parking lot off Scenic Road

and native vegetation. There are plans to reconfigure some of the existing parking areas at the Reserve to increase parking efficiency and reduce negative resource impacts (i.e., at all unpaved parking areas located along the south shore of the Reserve). Recognizing the need to reduce visitor-caused degradation of natural and cultural resources, the relocation and/or removal of parking from the Reserve is an important consideration of the General Plan, in conjunction with other strategies for visitor use management, such as a reservation system, regional transportation center, and guided tours.

The State Beach has a parking lot off of Scenic Road that is used by visitors for access to the beach and Carmel River lagoon. This parking lot was severely damaged by river breaching activities in 2011, which resulted in the parking lot losing parking spaces. The parking lot at Scenic Road is still threatened by increased erosion and vulnerable to flooding and blowing sand, as well as to future sea level rise. General Plan issues for this area include whether it is feasible to maintain this parking area in the long-term and how to best provide public access to this section of the State Beach.

Additional parking for the State Beach also occurs along SR 1 at Monastery Beach. The approved 1987 General Plan Amendment included plans for two additional parking areas at the State Beach: a 75-space parking lot on the 36-acre area north of the Bay School and a 10-space parking lot near the southern portion of Monastery Beach. Neither of these parking lots were built due to a lack of funding, concern over development in these areas, and a desire by local residents to retain the areas in open space.

Visitor demand exceeding the parking capacity within the Reserve and at the State Beach has resulted in many visitors parking on the shoulders of SR 1 and walking into the park units. Hundreds of cars can be found parking within the highway right-of-way shoulders on busy days. Existing shoulder space within the right-of-way of SR 1 near the Reserve can support approximately 325 cars. Pedestrians walking along the highway shoulders have caused increased concern for pedestrian safety, because visitors try to cross SR 1, which has a 55-mph speed limit and no pedestrian facilities in this area. Parking along SR 1 has also resulted in park visitors shortcutting through the Reserve's perimeter fence resulting in resource degradation.

High visitor demand for parking is region-wide. Palo Corona Regional Park has very little parking. MPRPD has used Palo Corona Regional Park's 13 vehicle parking spaces to limit public visitation until a master plan is completed. A 58-space parking lot was recently constructed within Palo Corona Regional Park; however,

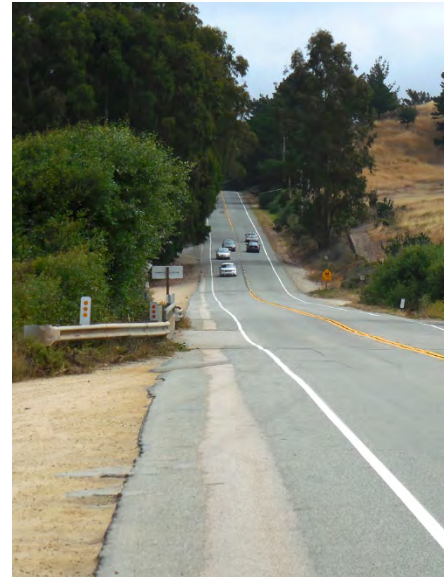
with existing traffic conditions along SR 1, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is requiring a southbound left-turn lane improvement and roadway widening at the intersection before public access to the parking lot is allowed. These improvements are to occur as part of the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project (Carmel River FREE Project) causeway bridge and floodplain improvements, a two-year, \$25-million project that is anticipated to begin construction in 2020. Public vehicular access to Palo Corona Regional Park will be restricted from using the parking lot until these roadway improvements are completed (MPRPD 2017). MPRPD has expressed a desire to coordinate with CSP to provide visitor parking for the parks on a regional level.

## Potential Transportation Solutions

The addition of Point Lobos Ranch and Hatton Canyon to the CASP units provides opportunities to address current vehicular access, congestion, and parking problems and, in doing so, enhance visitors' experiences. A reservation system can be a primary management tool to address parking and degradation from visitor overuse in the Reserve. Implementing a reservation system for the Reserve will accomplish multiple objectives by managing daily visitation rates to sustainable levels to avoid or minimize resource degradation and will establish a formal Reserve entry system that does not depend on eliminating SR 1 parking and which can be augmented by a regional transportation center parking and shuttle system. Muir Woods National Monument implemented a parking and shuttle reservation system beginning in January 2018 to better manage visitor demand and improve visitor experience and congestion. Initial monitoring of the reservation system has shown many benefits, including decreased congestion and vehicle queuing at the park entrance, managed steady visitor levels throughout the day, and increased park/visitor experience (Golub, pers. comm., 2018).

In addition, visitor parking for the Reserve may be provided in Point Lobos Ranch. However, care in siting facilities is important because Point Lobos Ranch contains significant cultural and natural resources that could place limitations on development or visitor use. Areas near the A.M. Allan Ranch historic complex are examples of potentially suitable land for limited amounts of parking that may be developed in coordination with reduction or removal of parking from the Reserve.

The Lower Hatton Canyon area has potential to serve as a site for a multimodal transportation center, in partnership with local and regional transportation agencies and organizations. If CSP were to provide land for this center, transit and/or shuttle



SR 1 illustrating the absence of pedestrian facilities





Cyclists riding on SR 1 near Point Lobos Ranch



Visitors to the Reserve park on both shoulders of SR 1 and often cross the highway on foot

Known as “sleeper,” “sneaker,” or “king” waves, the sleeper wave is a large coastal wave that may appear in a wave train without warning.

operations could link to multiple park units in the region, including CASP units, and provide important alternative travel modes. Shuttles could be based here as part of a regional transportation hub with routes to the various regional and state park units, as well as to other local destination points of interest. Shuttles could be included in a future reservation system aimed at managing peak visitor use, including high season, holidays, and weekends.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

SR 1 is the primary highway in the vicinity of all four CASP units and the backbone of regional circulation. Pedestrian and bicycle circulation between park units is an important planning issue. All park units can be accessed via non-motorized and public transportation. SR 1 is classified as a Caltrans Class III Bikeway (Bike Route), which provides for shared use with pedestrian or motor vehicle traffic. This designation allows visitors direct access to all four of the CASP units by bicycle.

The most commonly mentioned issue for both pedestrian and bicyclist safety is the interaction with motorized traffic along SR 1. Because of the parking issues previously discussed, pedestrians often walk along or cross the busy highway. There is potential for additional connectivity and improved pedestrian and bicycle transportation opportunities between the park units.

### 3.2.4 Public Safety

Parkwide public safety issues within the CASP units primarily include visitor safety (i.e., aquatic, beach, and bluff hazards and pedestrians along SR 1) and wildfire danger.

## Visitor Safety

Hazards related to aquatic recreation and trails along coastal bluffs are an ongoing issue. The shoreline of the State Beach and the Reserve can be hazardous. Monastery Beach (part of the State Beach) is known for its steep beach leading to an off-shore underwater canyon. Rip currents, combined with occasional “sleeper waves,” have caused injuries and deaths. From 2000 to 2017, there have been seven fatalities at Monastery Beach or Carmel River Beach. CSP has posted warning signs at Monastery Beach, but visitors continue to use this beach for swimming. Monastery Beach is a popular destination, as the beach and parking access are very visible to people traveling on SR 1. CSP has implemented various actions to improve aquatic safety through visitor education, posted signage, and patrols by lifeguards and rangers.

For visitors who park their cars on the shoulder of SR 1 to access the Reserve or coastline of the State Beach, pedestrian risks can arise from crossing the busy highway on foot. Visitors park their vehicles on the road shoulders which are within the Caltrans SR 1 right-of-way, and are outside the authority of CSP. Visitors often walk along SR 1 and cross the travel lanes of this state highway at multiple locations.

## Wildfire

Like many places in California, Monterey County experiences wildfires. Historically, fires burned regularly through the Reserve and surrounding area. More recently, natural fires have been prevented, leading to a buildup of fuels. Major regional wildfires have occurred recently near the parks, including the 2016 Soberanes Fire, which ignited in Garrapata State Park and touched the easternmost section of Point Lobos Ranch. Residents in the Carmel Knolls community adjacent to Hatton Canyon and along Red Wolf Drive adjacent to Point Lobos Ranch have expressed concerns that public access to these properties could increase fire danger. Wildfire risk is predicted to worsen with climate change.

CSP, in coordination with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), is currently working to reduce fuels along the SR 1 corridor between the Reserve and Point Lobos Ranch. Another fuel-reduction project is the ongoing stand density reduction of the pine forest at the Reserve.

Evaluating fire hazards and coordinating with CAL FIRE and local fire agencies to address fire hazards with appropriate management techniques, including updating and finalizing wildfire management plans for all of the CASP units, is ongoing and critical. The potential for wildfire to adversely affect cultural resources, including historic structures, also exists at three of the four CASP units.



Open space on Point Lobos Ranch

### 3.2.5 Visitor Facilities

Visitor facilities within the Reserve include trails, benches, picnic areas/tables, an information station, a diver access ramp at Whalers Cove, stairs for beach access, restrooms, and interpretive displays. Visitor facilities within the State Beach include interpretive signs, restrooms at Monastery Beach and Carmel River Beach, and the service road/unpaved trail providing beach access. Within Upper Hatton Canyon, there is an unpaved service road/trail and there is a paved multi-purpose trail in the southern portion of the property. There are special event areas near the Barnyard Shopping Center and on Marathon Flats in the southernmost portion of Hatton Canyon. There are no visitor facilities within Point Lobos Ranch, because the site is not open to public access, although it is informally used by neighbors.



The Soberanes Fire, burning over 132,000 acres for three months from July to October 2016 in the coast range, reached the eastern edge of Point Lobos Ranch and became an expensive wildfire fight at over \$200 million.



View of Carmel Meadows neighborhood  
homes from the State Beach

A key planning issue is the degree to which visitor facilities that may increase demand should be added. Because of the sensitivity of natural and cultural resources in many locations (including preserves for both natural and cultural resources) and the existing traffic congestion in the SR 1 corridor, local input has raised concern about the need to avoid adding facilities that would increase visitation or increase traffic, such as a major visitor center. However, during the past several years, there have also been a wide range of suggestions from the public for new or improved facilities to serve visitors at CASP units, notwithstanding the competing input about avoiding new visitor-attracting facilities. The park units will be assessed with regard to providing high quality outdoor recreation opportunities to the people of California while also protecting the area's unique resources.

Some residents in surrounding neighborhoods have opposed development of new facilities near their homes. Some Carmel Highlands residents opposed improvements that may result in increased use at the Reserve. Residents of the Carmel Meadows subdivision, adjacent to the State Beach, have voiced opposition to developing any park visitor facilities at the Odello Farm complex. Residents along Red Wolf Drive and Riley Ranch Road have objected to visitor access and facilities in Point Lobos Ranch near their homes and residents of Hatton Canyon have expressed concerns about extending the paved multi-purpose trail to the top of the canyon. Local residents do not want to see these areas developed in a manner that will result in increased public use, increased noise, potential for increased trespass issues, and loss of solitude and sense of place.

The General Plan team will review facility constraints and opportunities and the General Plan will provide guidance about what facilities will be planned on each property and which existing facilities could be adapted to provide for the desired uses.

### 3.2.6 Recreation Opportunities

Both the Reserve and the State Beach allow for various types of outdoor recreation, such as sightseeing, walking/hiking, photography, sunbathing, sunset viewing, painting, nature appreciation, bird watching, picnicking, swimming, beachcombing, surf fishing, and whale watching. Bicycling is only allowed on paved roads within the Reserve. Snorkeling, kayaking, scuba diving, and paddle boarding are available in the Underwater Park at the Reserve by reservation. Both the Reserve and the State Beach are limited to day use only.



Some uses are not allowed in the Reserve because of the potential to damage sensitive resources. State Natural Reserves consist of areas with outstanding natural or scenic characteristics and, because of this, the law restricts manipulating resources to the “minimum required to negate the deleterious influence of man” (PRC Section 5019.65 [a]) in State Natural Reserves.

Recreation uses are not allowed if they would damage natural or cultural resources. Opportunities exist to consider new types of recreation, however, while preventing damage to sensitive resources and remaining consistent with the unit classification and desired visitor experience. One potential recreation opportunity is to provide wi-fi in the Reserve and use that wi-fi as part of interpretive tours.

Public outdoor recreation activities are not currently allowed at Point Lobos Ranch, because it has not yet been opened for public access.

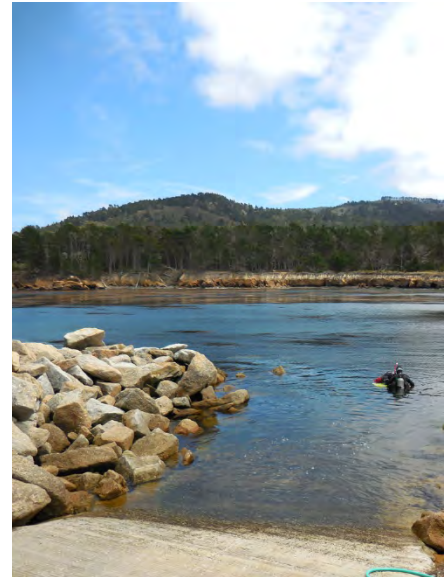
MPRPD’s Palo Corona Regional Park includes land adjacent to the San Jose Creek area of Point Lobos Ranch. MPRPD is preparing the Palo Corona Regional Park General Development Plan and has evaluated camping and other recreational uses on this portion of their property, assuming that access and parking is made available through Point Lobos Ranch, along the San Jose Creek Canyon Road easement. When Point Lobos Ranch is available for public use, it is anticipated that trails will connect CSP land to the adjacent Palo Corona Regional Park.

Hatton Canyon is currently used for walking and bird watching along the utility service road/trail in the upper portion, as well as for biking, walking, and special events on the lower portion of the property.

There are numerous opportunities to coordinate proposed recreational uses with other open space agencies and organizations, like MPRPD and the BSLT, who own and/or manage park or open space properties near or immediately adjacent to the CASP units.

### 3.2.7 Interpretation and Education

Interpretation is essential to allow visitors to interact with and learn about the park units. The issues and opportunities for interpretation and education are important to help visitors learn about the richness of the natural and cultural resources and scenic beauty of the park units and understand how to be better stewards of those resources when using the parks. Visitors can be



Diver access ramp at the Reserve’s Whalers Cove

better informed and understand the resources, rules, safety issues and hazards, and be inspired by the messages about resource qualities so they can help to preserve and protect sensitive resources and have a safe and enjoyable experience.

The parks are also visited by local school groups to explore the natural and cultural heritage. The parks can provide excellent opportunities to expand the educational programs for students of all ages, including college level and beyond.

The 1979 General Plan provided guidance for interpretive themes for the Reserve and the State Beach and many of these themes are currently used. With the two additional properties considered in this general planning effort, there are opportunities for more comprehensive and integrated interpretation and education.

The use of digital information delivery and social media technology improves the ability to communicate interpretive stories. To take full advantage, the mix of interpretive opportunities should rely on use of the latest communication and presentation technologies. A significant percentage of people, particularly younger generations, prefer to gather information through digital audio or audio-visual means. Internet sources provide information. GPS helps find places. Mobile applications (apps) both gather and convey information at specific sites and offer interactive opportunities. Staying connected with others on-line occurs through Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, texting, and many other internet sites and resources. These communication channels can be used effectively in the park units for staying connected with some target audiences, and consequently, being able to reach people quickly to publicize events, such as conservation-related work projects, and to keep people up to date on park events.

Social media can be very effective and it requires a significant amount of staff and/or volunteer time to keep content fresh and to interact with users. There are many opportunities to use new and evolving technology and social media to supplement brochures, signage, and static exhibits. In some areas new technologies can replace current signage and exhibits, thus reducing visual intrusion and associated needs for maintenance, while increasing the likelihood of engaging younger audiences.



Picnic area within the Reserve

### 3.2.8 Maintenance and Renovation Needs

The Reserve has been public property since 1933. The State Beach was acquired in 1953. Utilities, buildings, and various facilities and underlying park infrastructure were built decades ago with much in need of repair, renovation, or replacement. Utilities in the Reserve were not designed to support modern demands. The existing entrance station has a phone line and electricity, but no restroom to accommodate the park staff who must leave the facility to use the public restroom nearby. Restrooms have had several ongoing maintenance issues because of the age of the sewer system. Some public locations within the Reserve do not have electricity. The parking lot surfaces near the Information Station have been damaged by tree roots making for rough pavement. There is also minor flooding where trails are not appropriately graded and several roads and trail sections need maintenance. Maintenance and facility renovation issues include better maintenance of the trails, such as vegetation and erosion control; enhancement of the Reserve's Information Station; adding phone service to Rat Hill; and renovation of maintenance and storage areas.

The parking area and restroom at the State Beach along Scenic Road have been damaged because of erosion. Stairs to the State Beach from the Carmel Meadows subdivision are in need of repair. The State Beach contains the Odello Farm complex, a group of historic buildings that should be assessed for potential adaptive reuse. However, the buildings are in an extremely dilapidated condition and have been subject to interim stabilization until decisions are made on their disposition. The structures are historic resources, which must be addressed during planning and potential reuse evaluations.

Point Lobos Ranch has several existing buildings and barns. Some buildings are currently being renovated for use as staff housing, while others are in need of repair and upgrades if they were to be used for official park use. Many of the buildings are historic resources, which has implications for future rehabilitation and use.

Except for the paved multi-purpose trail and unpaved service road/trail, there are no existing facilities within Hatton Canyon. The service road is used for sewer line access by CAWD. The unpaved service road/trail through Upper Hatton Canyon is in need of redesign because it acts as the drainage in many areas and erodes considerably when there is significant rainfall. The multi-purpose trail at the south end of the unit is in good condition and there are no specific renovation needs at this time.



Existing buildings on Point Lobos Ranch



Storage and maintenance facilities at the Reserve



## 3.2.9 Partnerships and Regional Integration

### Partnerships



The Point Lobos Foundation is one source of funding for the Reserve's volunteer program. Long-time partners, the Foundation helps protect the Reserve's environmental health by funding maintenance of trails and facilities, invasive plant removal, and visitor education programs.

Many organizations and agencies have interests in the CASP units and their protection and/or use and have established partnerships with CSP. Partners include nonprofit organizations like the PLF, Carmel River Steelhead Association, and BSLT; educational organizations such as local school districts and California State University at Monterey Bay (CSUMB); park and open space agencies like the MPRPD; transportation agencies like Caltrans, Monterey-Salinas Transit, and Transportation Agency for Monterey County; resource agencies like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, CDFW, and others.

One of the potential partnership opportunities relates to the coordinated use and management of federal, regional, state, and local parks and open space areas, including other state parks, the MPRPD regional parks, and the Los Padres National Forest. The MPRPD is preparing a General Development Plan for Palo Corona Regional Park, including trail connections. Attention to potential trail connections, mutually supportive planned uses, and coordinated resource management strategies among these agencies will create substantial benefits for resources and outdoor recreation in the region.



Point Lobos Ranch

Many agencies and organizations are currently working together in their individual purviews for the Carmel River, the Carmel River lagoon, and its associated resources. The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County leads the Carmel River Watershed Task Force to address issues in the watershed, including water supply, flood control, habitat, and education. CSP should continue to work with the organizations in the task force to coordinate efforts in the watershed. Management of the lagoon will include close coordination with CSP, Monterey County RMA, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Coastal Commission, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. CSP is working with Caltrans, Monterey County, and the California Coastal Commission to plan and build a coastal trail from Hatton Canyon to the Reserve.

Improved partnerships and coordination are needed to define and implement transportation solutions for the existing and expected future congestion in the community and the current reliance on personal autos to access CASP units. Caltrans, Monterey-Salinas Transit, and Monterey County will be key participants in

developing multimodal approaches to improve mobility, including transit, shuttles, and a transportation center in the urban community that would help reduce congestion on the region's highways. CSP should also work closely with Caltrans, Monterey County, and elected officials in developing creative solutions to SR 1 parking.

Other important partnerships involve coordination of resource management actions to meet multiple objectives. CSP is working with CAL FIRE to guide fire fuel reductions to locations that would not damage sensitive natural or cultural resources. CSP and CDFW are working together to manage important marine resources with effective coordination. CDFW has responsibility for marine protected areas that border CSP's marine reserve, while CSP maintains management of the Underwater Park portion of the Reserve.

## Regional Integration

Coordinated planning and management can identify recreation needs and desires and expand recreation opportunities by integrating recreation into a regional open space and recreation network, enhancing regional natural resource preservation and management, enhancing regional interpretation, and improving the effectiveness of maintenance, administrative, and visitor services. In addition, CASP units can benefit from improved regional transportation opportunities. The planning and management of the CASP units should consider interagency and regional coordination as key elements.

The CASP units are located near Garrapata State Park, BSLT lands, MPRPD's Palo Corona Regional Park, Santa Lucia Preserve, Jacks Peak Park, and other local parks and open space. The proximity of these properties and the similarity of natural, cultural, and recreational resources provide opportunities to manage these lands in a coordinated and integrated way. Coordination among the region's open space and park agencies as well as with adjacent private property owners can strengthen natural and cultural resource protection, enhance park operations, improve recreational and educational opportunities, and protect private property interests.

A regional planning effort has been initiated that aims to create an unbroken chain of public access parks and open space between the Monterey Peninsula and Big Sur. In 2013, the BSLT, CSP, MPRPD, and the PLF initiated a partnership effort known as the Lobos-Corona Parklands Project to support the creation and implementation of a collaborative, long-term vision for the



Source: Walkifornia (BLOG) 2/5/12  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEa7FmdlMmg>

Palo Corona Regional Park



Many visitors walk into the Reserve after parking on SR 1

collective landscape of state and local parklands and open space in the region, from Carmel south to Garrapata State Park. In 2014, the four organizations signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to formalize their collaboration.

This collaborative planning effort is looking to create a significant recreation and open space experience, foster an effective wildlife corridor, and enhance management opportunities by linking the Palo Corona lands with the BSLT and CSP adjoining park and open space lands. The Lobos-Corona Parklands Project partners are working together to develop a model partnership that will result in improved coordination and enhanced land management practices, trail planning and networks, regional transportation opportunities, public access and safety, and visitor educational and recreational experiences that will serve the community and the land.

## Relationships with Neighbors

Several residential neighborhoods are located near or adjacent to the Reserve, State Beach, Point Lobos Ranch, and Hatton Canyon. CSP seeks to maintain open communications with neighbors to address concerns that arise. Concerns raised by neighbors are addressed in the General Plan. CSP concerns involving neighbors also exist, such as perceived privatization of public lands by neighbors who may encroach onto CSP-owned land with private landscaping and/or other site improvements.

### 3.2.10 Communication and Public/Stakeholder Involvement

The Carmel area contains many informed and involved residents, organizations, agencies, and Native American tribes with interest in the CASP units. In addition, there are many visitors who live outside the region, and even outside the country. Ongoing communication with all interested parties, including neighbors, stakeholders, other agencies, Native American tribes, and the general public is key to the planning process. Multiple public and stakeholder meetings have been held at key planning milestones. District staff have met with residents of adjacent neighborhoods, organizations, tribes, and agencies during the planning process, in addition to the noticed public meetings.

See Planning Process in Chapter 1 for a summary of the process used throughout General Plan development to receive public and stakeholder input.

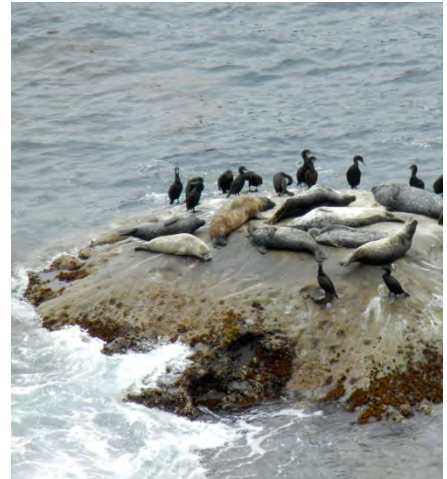


### 3.2.11 Financial Sustainability

To sustain and improve park operations, reliable and adequate funding is necessary. Numerous suggestions have been offered about how the park units could financially contribute to their own operations; however, many ideas have been controversial. There is some controversy regarding whether CSP should establish more concessions, restrict concessions, take advantage of leasable facilities and property, provide revenue-producing recreational activities, or rely on user or parking fees.

The Reserve experiences substantial visitation by walk-in visitors. A day use fee for walk-in visitors is a topic for consideration in the General Plan. The issue is complex and community input has been mixed. The opportunity exists to link a primary need for better management of walk-in visitors to improve resource protection with a secondary benefit of day use fee revenues.

An important component to past, present, and likely future funding for the Reserve is the PLF, which has raised and provided funds for multiple projects at the Reserve. The PLF, a nonprofit organization dedicated to “enhance the public’s awareness and enjoyment of the unique qualities of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, and to assist California State Parks in preserving the Reserve” (Point Lobos Foundation 2017), is a key partner at the Reserve.



Marine mammals and birds at the Reserve

## 3.3 Area-Specific Issues

Because the CASP General Plan addresses four existing park units (two classified units and two unclassified properties), many of the parkwide issues described above have area-specific implications. In addition to the parkwide issues, several area-specific issues are highlighted.

### 3.3.1 Visitor-Caused Resource Degradation at the Reserve

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve is iconic as a coastal landscape, with an internationally renowned reputation for its scenic beauty, marine and coastal ecosystems, and rich cultural history and prehistory. This beauty and richness of the Reserve’s resources and its easy accessibility have resulted in a strong attraction as a visitor destination, substantially elevating its popularity. Because of the popularity of the Reserve, the visitation has exceeded facility capacity on a regular basis and the high level of visitor use has resulted in degradation of natural and cultural resources. Concern has been expressed by park staff and the public about “loving the

Reserve to death.” Degradation includes erosion on slopes, trail incision and widening, vegetation trampling and loss, soil loss and conveyance of sediment into nearby marine waters, damage to cultural resources, and disturbance of marine and terrestrial wildlife. A key need is to reduce the overuse of the Reserve’s sensitive resource areas by visitors, which has resulted in substantial degradation. This issue is a key driver of goals and guidelines for the Reserve.

In light of rising visitation rates, there is a need to minimize off-trail use and resource impacts consistent with the classification of the Reserve as a State Natural Reserve. A strategy discussed in the Park Plan is to employ CSP’s reservation system to better manage visitation to reduce overuse impacts to sensitive resources. Another strategy is the increased use of guided tours.

### 3.3.2 Traffic Congestion and Access to the Reserve



Carmel River Lagoon and Wetland Natural Preserve

SR 1 in the Carmel area is a popular highway for tourists and a key community travel and commuter route for local residents. It is part of the Pacific Coast Highway, a 650-mile, north-south route that runs along most of the Pacific coastline. Access to the Reserve is currently dominated by visitor use of personal autos. This popularity and predominance of auto travel results in traffic challenges for park users and managers of all the CASP units, but most urgently at the Reserve. The popularity of the Reserve has resulted in lines of cars extending out from the Reserve entrance onto SR 1 on weekends, holidays, and during the busy summer vacation season. There is a dedicated left-hand turning lane for vehicles entering the Reserve from northbound SR 1 but no dedicated right-hand turn lane for those traveling southbound. In addition, visitors park their vehicles along the shoulders of SR 1 and walk into the Reserve. This adds to the traffic congestion and creates safety hazards because of visitors walking along or across the highway where there are no pedestrian facilities. Drivers on this popular route may not be aware that traffic is stopped near the entrance of the Reserve or by on-highway parking and pedestrian activity. Slow-moving or stopped cars substantially interfere with the flow of traffic on SR 1.

The SR 1 right-of-way, where visitors park vehicles on highway shoulders, is owned and managed by Caltrans and is not under CSP control. CSP supports the elimination of on-highway parking near the Reserve, because it contributes substantial numbers of walk-in visitors who contribute to overuse problems, is not safe, allows visitors to avoid paying fees, makes it difficult to control

visitor numbers, and creates a potential human health and safety issue. The Monterey County Board of Supervisors recently voted for a resolution proposing the removal of parking along SR 1 near the Reserve for safety purposes. CSP will continue cooperating with regional partners to help respond to traffic congestion issues near the park units and along SR 1. Resolution of traffic, transit, and access issues at the Reserve will require extensive cooperation among CSP, transportation agency officials in the region, Monterey County, local political representatives, and the California Coastal Commission.

### 3.3.3 Carmel River and Lagoon Flooding

Flooding has been a long-standing concern for the low-lying neighborhoods surrounding the Carmel River lagoon. Most of the State Beach and some surrounding neighborhoods lie within the 100-year floodplain of the river and have experienced extensive and repeated flooding. Levees have been added along the river to address flood protection; however, neighbors directly adjacent to the Carmel River and next to the State Beach do not have physical flood-levee protection. The 1996 amendment to the 1979 General Plan changed the designation of the Odello West field in the State Beach from agriculture to riparian and wetland habitat to facilitate wetland and riparian habitat restoration and support this area as an active floodway for the Carmel River. Subsequent projects were undertaken to achieve this goal, including the 2004 Carmel River Lagoon Enhancement Project, which converted approximately 98 acres of fallow agricultural land at Odello West to lagoon, wetland, and riparian habitats.

Monterey County Resource Management Agency (RMA) is the lead CEQA agency on the Carmel River FREE Project and is a co-sponsor of the project with BSLT. The County is the project sponsor of the causeway component in a cooperative agreement with Caltrans. USFWS is the NEPA lead agency, and also has a cooperative agreement with Caltrans for the federal environmental review of the project within the highway right-of-way. Because this project affects CSP lands, CSP has been an active partner for many years. The project consists of two interdependent components: floodplain restoration and SR 1 causeway over the river. The floodplain restoration consists removing earthen levees on the south side of the Carmel River channel upstream of SR 1, grading existing farmland above the 100-year floodplain elevation to create an agricultural preserve, grading on approximately 100 acres to restore the site's ecological function as a floodplain, and implementing a restoration



*Source: David Royal, Monterey County Herald  
6/13/2016*

Routine sandbar breaching activities at the State Beach



management plan. The causeway project consists of replacing a portion of the SR 1 roadway embankment with a pile-supported causeway section to accommodate flood flows underneath it. The causeway project is in design development and undergoing environmental review. The Carmel River FREE Project would result in the reconnection and restoration of approximately 100 acres of historic floodplain.



Visitors enjoying the Carmel River lagoon

The Monterey County RMA uses heavy equipment during regular, seasonal sandbar breaching activities to prevent flooding of adjacent neighborhoods. Mechanical sandbar management to prevent flooding results in impacts to resources around the lagoon. One of the routes for this heavy equipment to the mouth of the Carmel River used to include dirt roads that traversed through the Ohlone Coastal Cultural Preserve which has been designated along the rocky headlands located immediately north of Monastery Beach in the State Beach. Previous heavy equipment use within the cultural preserve resulted in resource damage. Monterey County currently accesses the beach at the Carmel River State Beach parking lot on Scenic Road, avoiding use of the cultural preserve.

A number of residences in the neighborhood north of the lagoon have been constructed in the floodplain (with the approval of Monterey County), making the residential structures vulnerable to flooding. South-central California coast steelhead, listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, use the lagoon, and NOAA Fisheries has concerns about this sensitive fish habitat. Under pressure from NOAA NMFS, the Army Corps of Engineers, USFWS, CDFW, California Coastal Commission, and local special interests to address these issues, the Monterey County RMA has proposed a plan to address the natural floodplain function and habitat improvement for federally listed species associated with the lagoon (south-central California coast steelhead, California red-legged frog, and snowy plover) by allowing the lagoon to breach more naturally, thereby decreasing the flood and erosion risk to private structures. Flood protection would be provided by a proposed flood protection wall, also called the “Ecosystem Protective Barrier” (EPB). However, the EPB is proposed to be located on CSP property within the Carmel River Lagoon and Wetland Natural Preserve. Also included in the proposal are a Scenic Road Protection Structure (consisting of 900 linear feet of rip-rap boulders placed in the Carmel River Beach) and an Interim Sandbar Management Plan.

CSP has expressed its opposition to the Ecosystem Protective Barrier and to the Scenic Road Protection Structure, based on conflicts with state law, the public trust, and the State Constitution. The county's plan has been undergoing regulatory and environmental review, including a 2014 biological assessment for the Endangered Species Act and a draft environmental impact report released for public review in 2016-2017.

Continued consideration of the constraints of flooding along the Carmel River and in and around the lagoon will be important in the General Plan.

### 3.3.4 Opening the Point Lobos Ranch Property

Acquisition of the Point Lobos Ranch Property preserved and protected a scenic, naturally sensitive, and culturally important landscape, including high-elevation vistas offering spectacular views of Carmel Bay and the coastline. The land supports one of the world's largest native Monterey pine forests, globally significant populations of the rare Gowen cypress, and other rare maritime chaparral plants. The property and surrounding public lands provide mountain lion habitat, and San Jose Creek supports habitat for the California red-legged frog and south-central California coast steelhead. The property also contains important Native American archaeological sites, including a major Rumsen village site, and an historic ranch complex.

Currently, the property supports CSP staff housing and a few operational and maintenance facilities, but it has not yet been opened for public use. Opening the property presents an opportunity to help redistribute visitor use from other units where resource degradation from overuse has occurred; however, it must be carried out in a manner that protects Point Lobos Ranch's resources. Point Lobos Ranch can support the improved management and resource protection at the Reserve by accommodating a limited amount of new parking for Reserve visitors in coordination with removal of parking spaces there. The General Plan addresses the approach for use of Point Lobos Ranch in ways that protect its sensitive resources and takes advantage of new trail and day use opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

## 3.4 Planning Alternatives

The planning alternatives help CSP consider options for use and management of the units and properties and present choices to the public during the planning process leading to development of the Preliminary General Plan.

During the course of General Plan preparation, CSP considered alternative concepts for management, visitor access and uses, park facilities, and classification of the units and properties. CSP has maintained open communication with the surrounding Carmel community, has involved stakeholders for many years, and has been committed to substantial public outreach and involvement during the course of General Plan preparation. Development and review of planning alternatives have been key steps in gathering community input, understanding community and stakeholder concerns, and defining a preferred plan.

Two planning alternative concepts were initially developed with parkwide and area-specific issues in mind, along with public, agency, and stakeholder input received in the beginning stages of the planning process. The alternative concepts offered features and facilities that highlighted a range of visitor opportunities in each unit. These alternative concepts were presented to the public and provided opportunities for further public input and feedback before the final preferred alternative was developed.

Public input focused on natural and cultural resource protection and traffic congestion as two key topics of interest.

The draft preferred alternative responded to this public input by reducing the size or amount of new visitor facilities, including multimodal transportation options intended to reduce traffic congestion, and proposing a visitor reservation system to efficiently manage visitor use and optimize resource protection. The preferred alternative represents the Park Plan contained in this document and described in detail in Chapter 4.