

# Cuyamaca Rancho State Park General Plan



Photo courtesy of Cuyamaca Outdoor School

## Interpretation and Education Resources

Nancy Mendez  
Regional Interpretive Specialist



The Interpretation and Education Resources at Cuyamaca Rancho State Park include a variety of Interpretive Facilities, Programs, Collections, and Support.

# Interpretive Facilities



- Green Valley

Interpretive Facilities are located in four primary areas of the park. Beginning at the southern end and moving northward, these areas are Green Valley, ...

## Interpretive Facilities



- Green Valley
- VC/Outdoor School

... the Visitor Center and Outdoor School area, ...

## Interpretive Facilities



- Green Valley
- VC/Outdoor School
- Paso Picacho

... Paso Picacho, ...

## Interpretive Facilities



- Green Valley
- VC/Outdoor School
- Paso Picacho
- Stonewall Mine

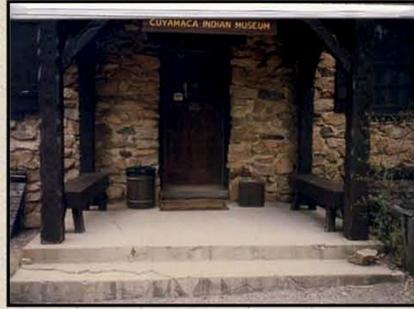
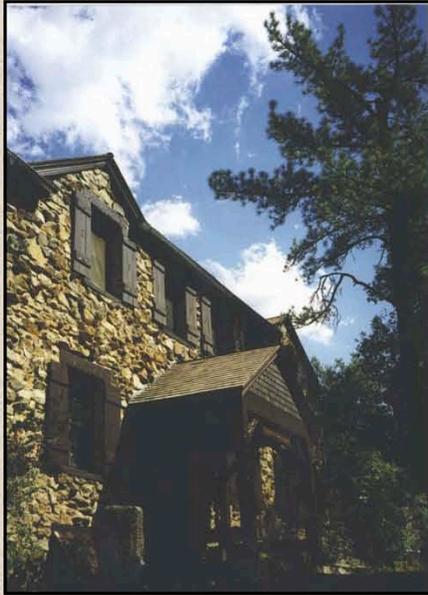
... and Stonewall Mine.

## Green Valley Campfire Center



Nestled among oak trees and within steps of the Sweetwater River, the campfire center is the primary interpretive facility in Green Valley.

## Visitor Center



The historic Dyar House served as the park's visitor center for several decades. New exhibits were being developed when the 2003 Cedar Fire damaged most of the park, including the Dyar House.

# Visitor Center Exhibits



The aftermath of the Cedar Fire required exhibit plans to be modified, and a modular building was purchased to serve as a temporary visitor center. The new exhibits interpret diverse park-related topics, including Kumeyaay heritage, natural history, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and fire management.

# Cuyamaca Outdoor School



Photo courtesy of Cuyamaca Outdoor School

Operated by the San Diego County Office of Education, the Cuyamaca Outdoor School has been serving San Diego youth since 1946. Approximately 400 6<sup>th</sup> grade students attend the camp every week during the school year. Students participate in hikes throughout Cuyamaca Rancho State Park as part of their natural science based curriculum, and about half of the students learn about the park's resources at the visitor center.

# Paso Picacho



Campfire Center



Nature Den



Wayside Exhibits



Nature Trail

A variety of interpretive facilities are located at Paso Picacho, including a campfire center and the Nature Den. Wayside exhibits interpret nocturnal animals and voices of the woods. The self-guiding Nature Trail helps visitors discover the park's dynamic nature. Vistas along this half-mile trail include Stonewall Peak and Lake Cuyamaca.

## Stonewall Mine



The Stonewall Mine site includes a reconstructed miner's cabin and the Stonewall Mine ruins. The ruins are surrounded by modern cyclone fencing which provides limited views of the mining shaft and related equipment. Interpretive displays are featured inside the reconstructed cabin, which is open during park hours.

## Wayside Exhibits & Panels



Other interpretive facilities include wayside exhibits and panels located throughout the park and at the pull-outs along Highway 79. Topics range from the Cedar Fire to Velvet Ants and Mountain Lions.

## Interpretive Programs

- Nature Walks
- Campfire Programs
- Roving Interpretation
- Junior Rangers



Interpretive Programs at the park include Nature Walks, Campfire Programs, Roving Interpretation, and Junior Rangers. An annual average of 1500 people have attended the park's interpretive programs since 2007.

# Junior Rangers



The California State Parks Junior Ranger Program is designed for 7- to 12-year olds. Young visitors to Cuyamaca Rancho State Park are invited to participate in Junior Ranger activities, which usually follow the Saturday Nature Walks. Activities address topics such as California Indians, Ecology, and Animal Life.



A special program focusing on the park's reforestation project was presented last spring to California's sixth grade students. A park interpreter used this satellite truck's distance learning equipment to bring Cuyamaca Rancho State Park to science classrooms throughout the state.

# Interpretive Collections



The Park's Interpretive Collections are comprised of four primary types: historic objects, images, cultural artifacts, and natural history specimens. Historic objects, including this logging sled, are displayed at Stonewall Mine. More than 800 images in photograph, negative, and slide format document the park's history and resources. Cultural artifacts are primarily associated with archaeological excavations at the park. Natural history specimens such as mountain lion and coyote are displayed in the park's visitor center.

## Support for Interpretation

- Park Staff
- Volunteers
- Interpretive Association



Park staff serves a critical role in supporting interpretation by providing outreach programs and managing the park's volunteer program. Those who volunteer in the Interpreters Assistance Unit lead nature walks, staff the visitor center, and present campfire talks. An annual average of 3,213 hours is donated by volunteers for the park's interpretive programs.

# Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association (CRSPIA)

- Museum store
- Visitor Center exhibits
- Interpretive panels



The Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association (or, CRSPIA) has been a park partner since 1977. The association raises funds through its sale of museum store items, firewood, and ice. Among the support for interpretation that CRSPIA has provided are funds for the temporary visitor center exhibits and new interpretive panels for Stonewall Mine and along the Stonewall Peak Trail.

# Interpretation Audience Demographics

- Campers
- Regional residents
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade students



Photo courtesy of Cuyamaca Outdoor School

At least three key audiences participate in the park's interpretation and education programs. Nature Walks and Campfire Programs are mostly attended by the park's overnight campers. The Visitor Center audience is primarily comprised of San Diego and Imperial Valley residents. A third key audience is the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students who attend Cuyamaca Outdoor School.

## Climb With Care

**The climb is challenging; the reward is enticing.**

Stonewall Peak Trail is a moderately difficult four mile round-trip walk with an 850' elevation gain. The trail climbs almost immediately. The last hundred feet consists of steps and a guardrail.

The views from the summit of Stonewall Peak are worth the hike and the hike is worth your preparation. Please follow these recommendations:

- Bring water with you. You'll need to drink up to a gallon of water if you hike all day in warm weather.
- Wear sturdy, comfortable footwear.
- Hike with someone. If you hike with children, keep them close to you.
- Be alert to weather changes. Visitors standing at the summit are vulnerable to lightning strikes during electrical storms.
- Watch for rattlesnakes. Avoid placing your hands on boulders or in rocky crevasses. If you see a rattlesnake, walk away from it. If you hear a rattle, stop moving, locate the snake, and slowly move away from it.
- Keep an eye out for mountain lions. Although they normally avoid people, they can be aggressive. If you see one, stand your ground. Pick up small children. Do not bend over or turn your back on the animal. Make yourself look as large as possible by spreading your jacket out and moving your arms. Back away slowly. If attacked, fight back.
- Stay on the trail and do not cut any switchbacks. Help us protect the trail's vegetation and reduce erosion problems.
- Please leave "no trace." Enjoy the hike without disturbing park resources, including wildflowers and rocks.




## Escale Con Cuidado

**Escalar es un reto, el premio es atractivo.**

El Sendero de la Cumbre de Stonewall es una caminata medianamente difícil, de cuatro millas en un viaje de ida y vuelta, con una pendiente de elevación de 850 pies (263 metros). El sendero se eleva, casi inmediatamente luego de comenzar. Los últimos 100 pies (33 metros) consisten de pedruzcos y una baranda.

Cuando aprecie la vista desde la cima de Stonewall Peak, se dará cuenta que vale la pena hacer la caminata, para la cual le recomendamos realizar los siguientes preparativos:

- Traiga agua consigo. Necesitará beber hasta un galón (3.8 litros) de agua, si camina todo un día con alta temperatura ambiental.
- Use zapatos fuertes y cómodos.
- Haga la caminata acompañado. Si va con niños, asegúrese que estén cerca suyo.
- Manténgase alerta a los cambios en el tiempo. Los visitantes que estén de pie en la cima son vulnerables a recibir un rayo durante una tormenta eléctrica.
- Tenga cuidado con las serpientes cascabel. Evite poner las manos en rocas grandes o en las grietas entre las rocas. Si ve una serpiente cascabel, aléjese de ella. Si escucha el sonido de una serpiente cascabel, deténgase, localice a la serpiente, y lentamente aléjese de la misma.
- Manténgase alerta por los leones americanos, también, llamados pumas. Pese a que ellos, normalmente, evitan a la gente, pueden ser agresivos. Si ve a uno, defienda su posición. Tome a los niños pequeños. No se agache, ni dé la espalda al animal. Haga que su cuerpo aparezca lo más grande posible, extendiendo su chaqueta hacia los costados y moviendo los brazos. Retroceda lentamente. Si es atacado, defiéndase.
- Manténgase en el sendero, y no siga la ruta en zigzag. Ayúdenos a proteger la vegetación del sendero y a evitar los problemas de erosión.
- Por favor, no deje "rastros". Goce de la caminata sin perturbar los recursos del parque, incluyendo las flores silvestres y las rocas.

Another demographic group is Spanish-speaking visitors, which park management estimates to be between 3 and 5% of the total park visitors. This percentage can be higher on weekends. Although there are no interpretive programs currently offered in Spanish, one new public safety panel is bilingual. Additionally, Junior Ranger materials are available in English and in Spanish.



Planning for interpretation and education depends on understanding the park's existing conditions, including the visitors we serve. What new interpretive facilities and programs might better connect visitors with the park's resources? Which new park visitors should we be planning for, and what needs might they have? We welcome your participation during this general plan process for Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.