



THE FOREST OF NISENE MARKS STATE PARK • GENERAL PLAN

Newsletter #1

February 2001

Planning Process for General Plan is Underway

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is beginning the planning process for preparing a General Plan for the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park.

What is the General Plan?

The General Plan is the primary management document for units of the State Park System, establishing its purpose and a management direction for the future. By providing long-term strategies, guidelines, and goals, the General Plan defines the framework for the park's development, management, and public use. When complete, the General Plan will guide day-to-day decision making and the development of focused management plans and other projects that implement the General Plan's goals.

What is the Forest of Nisene Marks?

The Forest of Nisene Marks is a State Park in Aptos, California. The park was created in 1963 with land donated to the State. Other parcels have been added to the park over the years since its creation, resulting in a total of approximately 10,000 acres. The thick forests hide the fact that much of the land has a rich cultural history, related primarily to logging. The landscape has been shaped and altered by logging railroads, trails, settlements, and mills. Natural events such as earthquakes, floods, and landslides have also shaped the land. Today, the natural processes of succession and forest regeneration are reclaiming the historic landscapes. The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park is a fascinating patchwork landscape rich in natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

What's Happening at the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park?

As the communities around the park have grown, the park has become a popular open space escape for area residents. The needs and desires for recreation and public

use need to be balanced with the mission and policies of California State Parks. The deeds for parcels within the park carry various deed restrictions that effect permitted uses. The General Plan will review and clarify recreational land use in the Park.

How can I participate?

The planning process for the General Plan will provide several opportunities for public participation through attendance at public workshops and by submitting written comments. The process will take at least 12 months, depending on the number of issues. Three public workshops are planned during the preparation of a Draft General Plan. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will then be prepared to assess impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). You can stay informed about the planning process by adding your name to the mailing list (see the form in this newsletter).

Public Workshop Planned

The first public workshop is scheduled for Sunday, March 11, 2001 at the Soquel High School auditorium located at 401 Old San Jose Road, Soquel, California 95073. An informal open house is scheduled from 2:00 PM TO 4:00 PM. A formal presentation on the park and the General Plan will begin at 4:00 PM, followed by a public comment period. The goal of this meeting is to identify the range of issues to be addressed by the General Plan.

The facilities are ADA accessible. Individuals requiring special assistance can leave a message at 831-429-2882.

A Brief History of the Forest of Nisene Marks

The peaceful redwood groves of the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park conceal a history of cataclysmic forces that have shaped and re-shaped the landscape. Place names such as Big Slide, the Epicenter, China Ridge, Big Stump and the Mill Site echo the floods, earthquakes, wildfires and logging that punctuate the park's history. Since the creation of the state park in 1963, the biggest events have been natural ones, most notably the flood of January 1982 and the Loma Prieta Earthquake of October 1989.

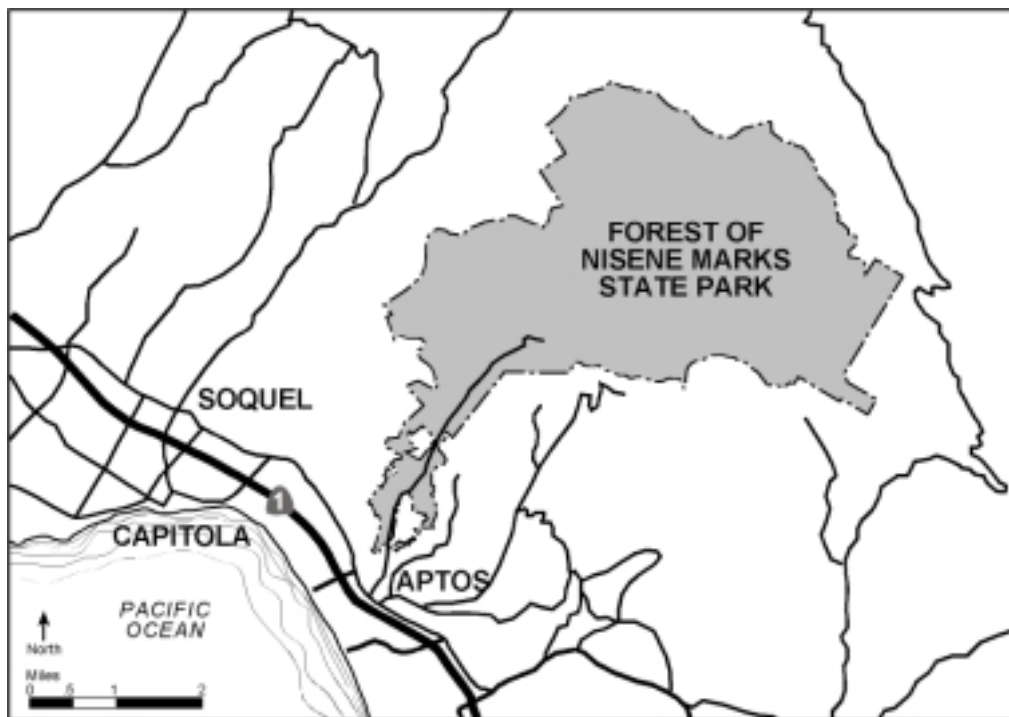
The steep, heavily forested canyons had little value for the Spanish and Mexican inhabitants who settled in the Monterey Bay Region in 1770. When the land was finally granted to Rafael Castro and his sister Martina beginning in 1833, it was the coastal terraces they sought for their livestock, not the dark, brooding forests to the north. The forested land passed to their descendants relatively untouched, and it was not until the early 1850s that loggers tentatively began to enter the Aptos Canyon to cut some of the smaller redwoods for shakes and lumber. When Claus Spreckels purchased most of Rafael Castro's Aptos Rancho in the early 1870s, he increased the logging tempo in the more accessible forests in the lower Aptos canyon.

The upper Aptos Canyon was unlocked in 1883 by the technical and financial resources of the Loma Prieta Lumber Company, a corporation backed by the Southern Pacific Railroad. Chinese railroad workers carved huge cuts and fills up the canyon, and by 1884 a standard gauge railroad was chugging along grades and across trestles high above Aptos Creek. A huge mill was built three miles up the canyon and beside it a town that eventually boasted a population of three hundred men and their families. For the next forty years, a succession of logging operations took over 140,000,000 board feet of redwood out of the Aptos Canyon and upper Soquel watershed. In the mid-1920s, most of the buildings were dismantled, the rails pulled up, and the clear-cut forestlands slowly began to heal. The Loma Prieta Lumber Company offered the property for sale, but it was too rugged even for the most optimistic developers.

Finally, the property caught the attention of a Salinas Valley farming family that included Nisene Marks and her adult children. Between 1951 and 1954 the Marks purchased not only the holdings of the Loma Prieta Lumber Company but also a number of adjacent parcels until they owned approximately 9,000 acres. After determining that there were no major oil deposits on the

property, the Marks children proceeded to establish a memorial to their mother, Nisene, who died in 1955. The result was the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, founded in 1963.

The core of the present-day state park is the land previously owned by the Marks family. However, since 1963 upwards of 1,000 acres have been added to the state park through the efforts of the Save the Redwoods League, Sempervirens Fund, and direct gifts. Most of the new properties are located north of the town of Aptos along Aptos Creek.



Questionnaire

1. What activities do you participate in when visiting the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park?
2. Approximately how many times did you visit the Forest of Nisene Marks in the past year?
3. What existing facilities do you believe need improvement? Please explain.
4. What facilities or improvements would you like to see added?
5. What issues would you like to see the General Plan address?
6. Any other comments?

Detach and return completed questionnaire to public workshop or mail to address below

Name (optional): _____

Affiliation (optional): _____

Address (to be added to the mailing list): _____

To be added to the General Plan Mailing List to receive updates and meeting notices:

- ☐ Return this questionnaire with your name and address to the address below.
- ☐ Send your name and address via email to: nisenemarks@rhaa.com
- ☐ Send your name and address via mail to: Royston, Hanamoto, Alley and Abey
225 Miller Avenue
Mill Valley, California 94941
Attn: The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park General Plan

Forest of Nisene Marks General Plan
Royston Hanamoto Alley & Abey
225 Miller Avenue
Mill Valley, CA 94941

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