

News Release



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Taking the Public on an Underwater Tour of Crystal Cove

First-ever, Live Camera Tour of Dolphin Birthing Area and Underwater Reef

Crystal Cove State Park – On October 20, 2001, the public is invited to take part in a tour of the underwater, Pacific Ocean portion, of Crystal Cove State Park, an area known to be a major birthing area for Bottlenose Dolphins. The State Department of Parks and Recreation has teamed-up with the Crystal Cove Conservancy to unveil an underwater marine technology that will broadcast live pictures of the underwater park to color television monitors on shore. In addition, those on shore watching will be able to interact with the divers.

State Park divers and marine scientists, wearing special full-face dive masks with microphones, headphones and digital video camera will take to the waters off the coast of Crystal Cove Saturday morning, October 20, 2001, to show the non-diving public the incredible underwater environment of the park. They will do this by using a wireless microwave transmission technology that allows the divers to send back live camera pictures to television monitors on shore. At the same time, because the divers will be suited-up with microphones in their dive masks, the public on shore will be able to speak directly to the divers and ask them questions.

“We at State Parks,” said Orange Coast District Superintendent Mike Tope, “see this as another way for us to do what we have been doing for decades, bring the interpretation of the resources to our visitors. However, this goes farther. This technology enables visitors who cannot become divers, and people all across the state and nation who cannot come to Crystal Cove, to take a journey through the wonders of the environment of this underwater park.”

This new technology at Crystal Cove will serve as a pilot program that can eventually be expanded into a major educational tool. It has the potential for changing the way people learn

and study our marine environment in that it could eventually be transmitted through cable television and computer lines to homes and school classrooms anywhere in the state or nation.

One of the divers for this effort is the Lifeguard Supervisor for the State Parks Orange Coast District, Ken Kramer. Said Kramer; "This brings the field trip to the people who cannot make the trip. If we can put this into classrooms around the state and the nation, the lessons teachers are using will jump off the pages of their textbooks into living color. This adds a whole new dimension for the education of our kids and we see the potential for this as being limitless."

This event is being hosted by the Crystal Cove Conservancy as a fundraiser; however it is free and open to the public. The Laguna Plein Air Painters Association will have paintings of Crystal Cove available for purchase. In addition, raffle tickets will be sold for a chance to win an original Crystal Cove painting and other donated prizes. A portion of the funds raised will be go to the Crystal Cove Conservancy, which will use the money for educational programs and for the restoration of the cottages within the historic district.

The Conservancy provided a matching grant to State Parks for the purchase of video equipment, the funds coming from the following sources:

State Parks	\$12,000.00
State Parks Foundation	\$2,000.00
Crystal Cove Conservancy	<u>\$12,000.00</u>
Total	\$26,000.00

Beyond the underwater park television experience, other events are also planned for the day, including: tidepool tours by the Ocean Institute and California State Parks; explanations of the kelp reforestation project at Crystal Cove by Garry Brown from Orange County Coastkeeper; an update on the research by Dennis Kelly on the Bottlenose Dolphin and birthing study; along with displays of early Native American inhabitants of Crystal Cove and displays of early 1900's photographs of Crystal Cove by the Alliance to Rescue Crystal Cove. In addition, the State Parks planning team, which is spearheading the public planning effort on the restoration of the historic district, will be available to answer questions regarding the proposed future vision of the district.

"There have been concerns," said State Parks Superintendent Mike Tope, "that this effort with the Crystal Cove Conservancy suggests that the Conservancy now has the inside track on controlling how we select a preferred alternative for the future of Crystal Cove. However, that is not true, no one has any inside track. This is strictly a way of showing the wonderful ways in which private groups can support the State Parks educational and interpretation program for Crystal Cove. This is a community effort and we will welcome this kind of positive partnership from others."

Note: For reporters wishing to do a preview of the Saturday events, there will be a full-dress rehearsal Friday, October 19, 2001, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Call Ken Kramer. But please do not publicize the dress rehearsal. Thanks.