

# Laguna Mountain: The Thrill of Discovery

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM)** public lands in southern San Benito County's Laguna Mountain Special Recreation Management Area including, Sweetwater and Short Fence, offer a variety of recreation opportunities. Hunting, primitive and developed camping, hiking, backpacking, stargazing, and wildlife viewing can be found. High on the ridges surrounding Laguna Mountain, east of Highway 25 and west of Coalinga, lies prime habitat for many different plant species such as golden eardrops, scarlet larkspur and Grinnell's beardtongue. Animals known to roam the areas of Laguna Mountain include mountain lions, deer, and wild pigs. Smaller creatures include rattlesnakes, whiptail lizards, and the side-blotched lizard. In the hills and the valleys surrounding Laguna Mountain there are natural treasures waiting to be discovered!

Grinnell's beardtongue, BLM Photo



## Hernandez Reservoir

Just east of Laguna Mountain Campground is the Hernandez Reservoir. Built and maintained by the San Benito County Water District, the reservoir's purpose is to help control flood waters of the area's river and streams. By catching water from the winter rain showers, the reservoir allows the San Benito River to run year round. Upon further examination, the reservoir is also important to wildlife in the area as a strategic water source. A herd of reintroduced Tule Elk can often be observed grazing near the south side of the Hernandez Reservoir. Please respect private lands by not entering the reservoir unless given permission by adjacent land owners. Call California State Parks at 209-826-1197 or San Benito County Water District at 831-636-4170 for more information on other reservoirs within the greater Central California region.

Hernandez Reservoir, BLM Photo



Blue Oak Acorns, Photo by Neal Kramer

## Surprising Seed Secrets

Areas surrounding Laguna Mountain recreation areas were used by California Native Americans. Archeologists have discovered chert projectile points and bedrock mortar and pestles giving us clues into the past. Local tribes used mortar and pestles to grind acorns from oak trees in the valley and the upland hills. The flour produced was used to make bread, soups, and gruels. Grinding acorns was a laborious process. It is thought that it took three hours to crush six pounds of acorns—not exactly as easy as jumping in the car and driving to the grocery store. Your help is needed to protect any artifacts you may find while exploring. If you discover artifacts while exploring, please leave them where they are, note the location, and report it to the Hollister Field Office at 831-630-5000.

## Town Under Water

Looking around the quiet Valley, it's hard to believe a town existed here and is now partially under the Hernandez Reservoir. The town, Erie, was likely derived from the larger and more well-known town of Erie, Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania town had been the former home of a prominent early citizen in the area. A school opened in the small California town in 1871. According to former state assemblyman and local historian Peter Fusetta in his book, "Beyond the Pinnacles", it boasted its highest attendance of 47 students just three years later. An important year for the valley, 1874, was also the year a Post Office and the first general store opened.



Hernandez Valley today, BLM Photo

According to an 1875 Directory of San Benito county, 75 people called Erie home. The Del Monte Hotel and a saloon serviced the public—mostly farmers and miners—in the area. The demise of the town was eventually due to the distance to the nearest railroad, over 60 miles away in Tres Pinos.

## A Name Change

Postal records indicate that in 1892, the Erie Post Office was renamed "Hernandez" and was moved several times over the years from its original site. Historians disagree over for whom the new town Hernandez was named. Some suggest it was local farmers Rafael and Jesus Hernández, in the area during the 1870's. Other historians believe that it was named for Augustine and Jesus Hernández. Regardless, the residents continued their way of life in the shadows of Laguna Mountain. A look at some of the remaining written records of the town provides clues to daily life of these residents.

## Revealing Ledger Entries

A ledger from the general store in Hernandez Valley dated 1905-1907 provides a glimpse into what the settlers in the area were purchasing; it is not much different than what people purchase today. On August 6th, 1906, a pair of overalls, soap, 50 lbs of onions, 264 lbs of bacon, and 2 lbs of flour were purchased for \$8.09. And just a few days earlier, July 22nd, 1906, 300 lbs. of bailing wire was purchased for \$13.50. Hay is still farmed in the Hernandez Valley today.

The activity from a busier time in the Valley has slowed. Hearing the sounds from a school or saloon are gone; listen instead for the Tule elk bugling in the fall or of the wind blowing through the blue oak trees. We encourage you to explore and investigate the areas surrounding Laguna Mountain. You never know what you may find.

Laguna Creek, BLM Photo



## Trails of Laguna Mountain

If a deeper examination of the area pulls you in, look to the trails near Laguna Mountain. A steep and rugged hike brings the avid hiker or equestrian rider up to a ridgeline. Once on top, you can drop into Miller Canyon and discover multiple waterfalls or follow the ridgeline and conquer the summit of Laguna Mountain towering at 4,462ft above sea level. Following the creek will bring you to a series of waterfalls ranging from several feet to over 50 feet, depending on water levels and recent rainfall. Take a break and soak tired feet in any of the pools for an extra treat. If heading to Laguna Mountain, respect private property in this area by reading posted signs and maps carefully. Please remember to use Leave No Trace® ethics by camping at least 200 feet from all water sources and trails. Water sources are unreliable and, if found, needs to be treated or boiled. It is strongly recommended to bring water with you in all times of the year.

A special thank you to the San Benito County Water District, 3 Rocks Research, and the San Benito County Historical Society for their help in providing access to information of the Hernandez Valley.



Campsite at Sweetwater Campground, BLM Photo

## Camping

In 2010, with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) monies, BLM established two developed campgrounds: Laguna Mountain (5 sites) and Sweetwater Campground (6 sites). Each campsite is equipped with a covered picnic table and fire ring. There is one vault toilet restroom available at each access location. Camp sites can accommodate full-sized RVs as well as tent camping. There are no hook-ups or water. Camping is limited to 14 days within any 28-day period at a particular site on all BLM public lands. Primitive, dispersed camping opportunities are also available, but vehicles are restricted to parking areas and there is no camping within 200 yards of any wildlife water improvement.

Please practice Leave No Trace® principles when visiting all public lands.

## Hunting and Shooting

Hunting opportunities on BLM public lands within the Laguna Mountain area consist primarily of upland game birds, wild pig and deer. BLM and California Department of Fish and Game manage game animals for hunting by providing watering sites (guzzlers) and planting cover shrubs. Shooting is prohibited within 150 yards (450 feet) of any developed area or toward occupied private lands. It is unlawful to shoot at game from vehicles.



Young Buck, BLM Photo

## How Can I Help?

Each year thousands of pounds of trash are hauled off public lands. Helping to make sure these lands stay clean is up to everyone using them. Pack out all garbage and do not litter. It is illegal to pollute or dump trash on any public lands or waters. If you see anyone polluting or dumping trash, please do not approach. Instead, call [1-888-DFG-CALTIP](tel:1-888-DFG-CALTIP) (24 hours a day/7 days a week) to report the polluting or trashing of public lands, water, plants, habitat, or the poaching of wildlife.

Want to volunteer on your public lands? Anyone over the age of 18 years can volunteer. Youths must volunteer with a parent/guardian or be part of an organized school, civic or church group with written consent. To become a volunteer, apply at [Volunteer.gov](http://Volunteer.gov) or contact the Volunteer Coordinator in the Hollister Field Office at 831-630-5035.

*America's Great Outdoors*



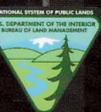
Bureau of Land Management  
Central Coast Field Office  
940 2nd Avenue  
Marina, California 93933  
Phone: 831-582-2200

- San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area**  
31426 Gonzaga Road  
Gustine, CA 95322  
(800) 346-2711
- Pacheco State Park**  
38787 Dinosaur Point Road  
Hollister, CA 95023  
(209) 826-6283
- Little Panoche Wildlife Area**  
5 miles W of Hwy 5 and 30 miles W of Firebaugh, on the southern side of Little Panoche Rd  
CA Dept of Fish and Game  
(209) 826-0463
- Mendota Wildlife Area**  
3 miles S. of Mendota near Whites Bridge  
CA Dept of Fish and Game  
(559) 655-4645
- Pinnacles National Park**  
5000 Highway 146  
Patterson, CA 95043  
National Park Service  
(831) 389-4485
- Other Local Resources**

*Laguna Mountain including Sweetwater and Short Fence Access Areas*

BLM

Hollister Field Office



# Welcome to Laguna Mountain Recreation Area



Please Respect Private Property

<<<To Hwy 25

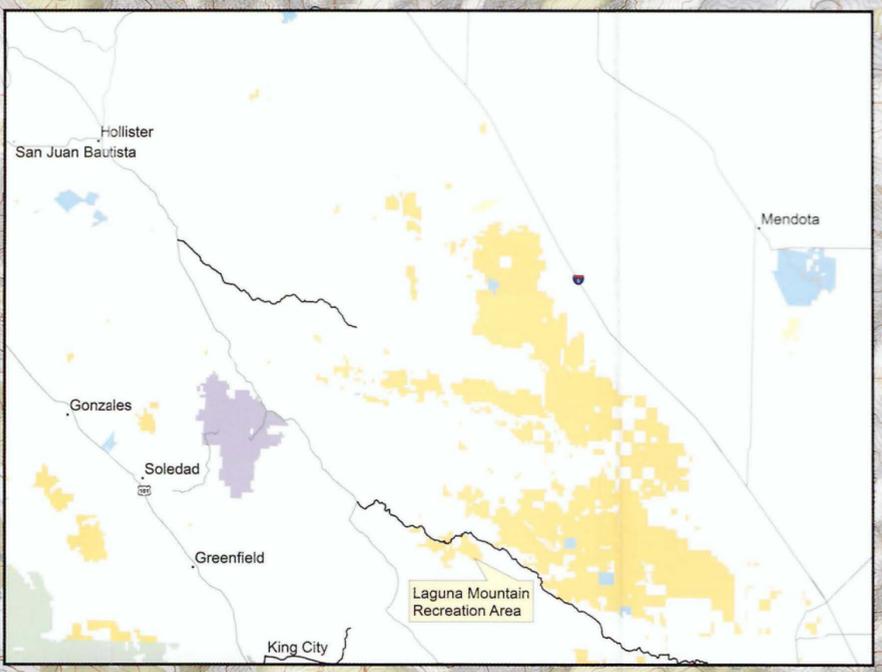
To Coalinga>>>

No Motorized Access Within Laguna Mountain Recreation Area

Reference Scale: 1:11,120



	Campground
	Primitive Campground
	Trailhead Parking
	Coalinga Road
	Existing Trail
<b>Land Status</b>	
	Bureau of Land Management
	Private/Other



## The Ten Essentials

Packing these items whenever you venture into the backcountry, even on day hikes or drives, is a good habit to acquire. On a routine trip you may only use a few of them. Yet you'll probably never fully appreciate the value of the Ten Essentials until you really need one of them.

1. Map
2. Compass
3. Sunglasses and Sunscreen
4. Extra Clothing
5. Headlamp/Flashlight
6. First Aid Supplies
7. Fire-starting Material
8. Matches
9. Knife
10. Extra Food & Water

## Leave No Trace



As more people use parks and recreation facilities, LEAVE NO TRACE® guidelines become even more important for outdoor visitors. Leave No Trace is a plan that helps people to be more concerned about their environment and to help them protect it for future generations. Leave No Trace applies in the frontcountry as much as it does in the wilderness (backcountry).

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

## Heritage Resources

Please respect both prehistoric and historic archeological sites by observing the following guidelines:

- Treat all rock art sites, historic structures and buildings, and archeological sites with respect;
- Do not damage historic structures or archeological sites. Avoid moving things around, touching or climbing on the roof or walls of any site, building, or structure;
- Enjoy rock art features by viewing, sketching, or taking photographs of them. Never chalk, trace or touch the art;
- Do not make camp or build fires in, on or near an archeological site.

If you discover an artifact or fossil, leave it in place for others to enjoy and report your find to the BLM. Collecting without a permit is illegal. Please report any known or suspected looting or vandalism of archeological or paleontological sites to the BLM or other local law enforcement authority.

## RULES REGARDING FIRE USE

Campers are required to have a FREE California Campfire Permit for any fire OUTSIDE of designated fire rings. Permits can be obtained from the Hollister Field Office and are generally not issued during the dry season (summer). Additional requirements include carrying water and a shovel to make sure the campfire is dead out before leaving the area. Never attempt to build a campfire during a windy day or leave the campfire unattended.



Use your smart phone's QR Code Reader App to scan the code or visit [www.blm.gov/4xkd](http://www.blm.gov/4xkd) to find out more information on the Laguna Mountain area. Cell phone service is not available in all areas.



**Restriction on Lead Ammunition**  
In order to prevent the accidental poisoning of California condors, lead ammunition has been banned for most kinds of hunting.

U.S. Bureau Of Land Management  
Hollister Field Office  
20 Hamilton Court  
Hollister, CA 95023  
(831) 630-5000  
[www.blm.gov/ca/hollister](http://www.blm.gov/ca/hollister)