

THE  
**FUTURE  
OF  
AMERICA'S  
NATIONAL  
PARKS**

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Channel Islands National Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



**Site:** CHIS

**Year:** 2007

**Vision Statement**

Often called the Galapagos of North America, the Channel Islands are home to plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. Animals such as the island fox and the Santa Cruz Island scrub jay can only be found on these islands. The isolation of the islands has allowed plants and animals to evolve into new species different from relatives on the mainland. The marine environment is one of the most productive on earth.

The natural abundance of the islands has attracted humans for nearly 13,000 years. More than 2,500 archeological sites have been identified. The oldest dated human remains in North America were discovered on Santa Rosa Island, while Spanish explorers, 19th century hunters, ranchers, fishers, and the military all played a role in the islands' history. There are more than 100 known shipwrecks remain as examples of California's rich maritime heritage.

The islands serve as an oasis in an urban area. Today, approximately 15 million people speaking over 170 different languages live within 100 miles of the islands. Each year, thousands of scuba divers explore island reefs and kelp forests. Boaters shelter in more than 100 secluded anchorages. Thousands of day visitors and campers enjoy island vistas, trails, sea caves, and tidepools. Researchers also find the island environments to be an accessible laboratory of unequalled quality.

As stewards of Channel Islands National Park, we must know and understand park resources, restore and maintain those resources when they are in decline, protect resources and mitigate threats to them, and, finally, connect the park and its resources to the public. These four pillars of stewardship offer a way to analyze the structure and function of operations relative to the park's mission and purpose. The Centennial vision of the park is to build upon these four pillars.

Connecting the park to the people is critical to our stewardship. Channel Islands National Park, along with our network parks, Santa Monica National Recreation Area and Cabrillo National Monument, must take on the increasing role of making parks relevant to an ever-changing and diverse population. Increased partnership brings more research, more friends, and more people who understand and appreciate parks. This will be an emphasis for us going forward. In addition, expanding our volunteer programs will bring about a stronger connection between the resource and the community.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Russell Galipeau

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**STEWARDSHIP**

☒ **Improve the condition of park resources and assets.**

☒ **Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.**

An important component of conservation is monitoring the health of terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The protection, restoration, and stewardship of resources requires the establishment of baseline data regarding park "vital signs" that can then be monitored for changes over time. The monitoring data helps determine where and when to intervene and how far its restoration actions should go.

In 1988, the park published twelve monitoring protocols which it determined were critical to understanding the marine and terrestrial components of the park. In 1991, Channel Islands National Park was selected by the NPS as a prototype Long-term Ecological Monitoring park. This allowed the park to initiate monitoring in the terrestrial environment and to strengthen marine monitoring. Monitoring of park ecosystems involves collaborating with numerous partners such as NOAA, U.S. Geological Survey, California Department of Fish and Game, The Nature Conservancy and Institute for Wildlife Studies, as well as several universities and museums. These partnerships are important because of their value in scientific expertise and outreach.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

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STEWARDSHIP

☒ **Serve as the Preeminent resource laboratory by applying excellence in science and scholarship to understand and respond to environmental changes.**

☒ **Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)**

For over 20 years the park has been engaged in ecological monitoring in the park's waters. The park requested that California create a network of State marine reserves. Following a 3 year consensus-seeking process, the California Fish and Game Commission established 9 marine reserves in Channel Islands National Park. These reserves aim to enhance depleted populations, restore impaired ecosystems, and rebuild collapsed fisheries.

Ecological monitoring of the reserves is essential to evaluating their effectiveness and restoring ecosystem health. As the park contains the largest network of marine reserves in the U.S., it provides the best opportunity to demonstrate the conservation value of no-harvest zones. This project expands the park's existing monitoring program by establishing 16 new fixed sites inside and outside of reserves, providing baseline data to properly evaluate the effectiveness of the new marine reserves.

Partnerships are not restricted to research and monitoring. Education, outreach and enforcement are essential. Our principle partners include: the State of California, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, fishers, recreational users, NGOs and academia.

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ENVIRONMENT

☒ Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

☒ Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.

One of the operational goals of the park is to eliminate reliance on non-renewable energy wherever possible and strive to become carbon neutral by 2016. As new facilities are constructed, the park works to maximize the use of greening technology. Currently there are 72 renewable energy applications in operation, ranging from small solar installations to a large-scale hybrid wind/photovoltaic system.

The greening measures taking place within the park are not only environmentally-responsible, they also provide substantial long-term financial savings. The logistics of supplying fuel to off-shore islands has significant costs associated with delivery, not to mention the risk of contaminating the fragile marine and island environments that the park is charged with protecting.

The park's active and innovative approaches to conservation on the islands and the mainland offer substantial opportunities for future savings to the park in energy costs and resource consumption. The park is continuing to expand its greening programs, planning for the installation of additional solar panels on the islands and the mainland.

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RECREATION

☒ Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Volunteerism is an expression of citizenship and the park goal is to continue to engage our surrounding communities in citizenship. The park relies heavily on volunteers to support important activities. In FY2006, 676 volunteers contributed 54,660 hours to park operations, which is equivalent to 26 full time positions. Volunteers staff the mainland visitor centers and provide interpretive and educational programs to visitors and school groups. The park also coordinates with the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary to share interpretive volunteer resources through the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps program, which provided 114 island naturalists for whale watching and park concessionaire island trips in FY2006.

There is ample opportunity to expand volunteer program and activities, however the parks capacity to support volunteers needs to be increased. Volunteers require staff time in training and matching volunteer skills with park needs. Transporting large groups to the remote islands poses significant financial barriers. Still, volunteers provide a tremendous contribution to the park and strengthen the relationship between the park and local communities.

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**EDUCATION**

☒ Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park sees distance learning as the future of education and outreach, linking remote park resources with local and distant communities. Through the use of new technologies, the park has taken great strides in connecting the park to visitors who are unable to actually set foot within the park. These strides are not just taken on land, but also 25 feet deep in the kelp forests of Anacapa Island, where the underwater program has been broadcasting live video footage with 2-way communication for 20 years.

The broadcast of "Channel Islands Live" is restricted to those visiting Anacapa Island. This creates a barrier to visitors and schools groups with limited transportation funds. The vision of the park is to work collaboratively with the Ventura Office of Education to broadcast this interpretive and curriculum-based program live to the mainland and into the classroom - with an ultimate goal of allowing the public and students in classrooms throughout the country to participate in the program. The park and its partners are looking into new ways to distribute programs like this via cable TV and the Internet. Other partners include the NOAA, park volunteers and the Naturalist Corps.

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**PROFESSIONALISM**

☒ **Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural, and recreational values.**

☒ **Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)**

The park needs to reestablish a friends group. A Friends group for the park would primarily serve to build and support the relationship between the park, local communities, and interested constituents. It could also provide access to private funding for specific projects that further preserve, protect, and enhance Channel Islands National Park and support the Centennial. A Friends group's non-profit structure and fundraising ability could generate financial support for the park through many means, including creating a trust or endowment to allow for access, management, and expansion of recurring visitor programs (e.g. underwater interpretive program, volunteer program, etc.).

In addition to increasing visibility for the park, similar programs have generated significant revenues.

The park should also consider expanding current partnerships with other relevant groups, including: the Santa Cruz Island Foundation, the Friends of the Island Fox, the Friends Group for the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, and National Park Foundation.

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