

Secondary Access

Existing Conditions and Issues

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PARK SUMMARY

The following section summarizes the existing land uses, facilities, and significant natural, cultural, aesthetic, interpretive, and recreational resources of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. The information was adapted from the Resource Inventory (Appendix G, under separate cover) that was initiated for the General Plan process and provided the baseline data for developing the 1) management zones and 2) the goals and guidelines found within the Plan Section of this document.

EXISTING LAND USE

The Park's rugged terrain plays host to trail use for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and most recently added to the list: geocaching. Santa Susana Pass Road is used as a recreational bike route, as well as a recreational motorcycle route.

Visitors usually come from within a 10-mile radius of the Park, and nearby residents often take advantage of the trails to walk their dogs, which state law requires to be on a leash. Organized hikes by local trail groups are currently the only known ongoing, interpretive activity.

EXISTING FACILITIES

There are no developed facilities within the Park (no parking, camping, picnic or posted and maintained trail facilities). The Park is open for day-use visitors only, and most use either street parking or parking lots at Chatsworth Park South.

ADJACENT LAND USE

Land use to the north and west of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park

consists mainly of open space and low-to medium-density residential neighborhoods. Chatsworth Park North and Chatsworth Park South, city parks operated by the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, are to the east. Garden of the Gods, a 23-acre park operated by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, is located to the northeast of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, and lands affiliated with Corriganville Park, which is operated by the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, are located adjacent to the northwestern corner of the Park.

Much of the northern boundary of the Park runs along Santa Susana Pass Road, and beyond that is State Route 118. California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works right-of-ways exist along these roadways.

Oakwood Memorial Park is to the east at the southeast end of the Park. A parcel along the south side of Santa Susana Pass road, owned by the Church at Rocky Point contains a recreational center and facility called KidsFutureNow! Other adjacent and onsite land holdings and right-of-ways include the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District pump station, an underground Metropolitan Water District metering connection, Calleguas Municipal Water District power generating facility, and Southern California Edison power lines and towers. The Southern Pacific Railroad runs east-west through the middle of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, although a majority of the railroad right-of-way is underground, through the Santa Susana Tunnel.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

The Park is located in a rural and unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County in the California Floristic Province, Southwest Region, Western Transverse Ranges Subregion. The climate is considered Mediterranean and fluctuates with the seasons, with hot dry summers and mild wet winters. Average annual rainfall is approximately 45.7 centimeters (≈ 18 in); which falls as rain primarily in the winter. The mean temperature is 16 degrees Celsius (61° F) with an average high of 23.7 degrees Celsius (74.6° F) and average low of 8.8 degrees Celsius (47.9° F). The freeze-free period is from 275 to 325 days.

Air Quality

Air pollutant emissions sources are typically grouped into two categories: stationary (point and area sources) and mobile sources (motorized vehicles). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has established ambient air quality standards for the following air pollutants:

ozone (O₃)
nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)
carbon monoxide (CO)
sulfur dioxide (SO₂)
lead (Pb)
inhalable particulate matter (PM₁₀)

Additionally, the California Air Resources Board has also established ambient air quality standards for the six pollutants regulated by the USEPA. Some of the California ambient air quality standards are more stringent than the national ambient air quality standards. In addition, California has established ambient air quality

standards for the following pollutants or air quality conditions:

sulfates
vinyl chloride
visibility

The Park is within the South Coast Air Basin. Because of its location and close proximity to major urban pollution sources, the Park often has poor air quality. A major portion of the air pollution affecting the Park is wind transported and likely arises from urban sources in the greater Los Angeles area. As of June 15, 2005, the South Coast Air Basin is in non-attainment for particulate matter (both PM-2.5 and PM-10), 1-hour ozone (extreme), 8-hour ozone (severe), and carbon monoxide (serious).

Hydrology

The Park is located within the Los Angeles River Hydrologic Unit. The Los Angeles River Hydrologic Unit consists of 74,622 hectares (184,395 acres) with the Los Angeles River being the major drainage in the unit. The Santa Susana Pass Wash, flowing west to east along the northern



Sandstone

border of the Park, is a first order stream and the only perennial water course flowing through the Park. It is generally characterized by a relatively narrow stream channel with a steeply incised bank, as it runs through the Park. Additionally, three unnamed ephemeral drainages, generally running west to east, flow through the Park (see Figure 2).

Geology and Geomorphology

The Park is located on the eastern edge of the Simi Hills. The Simi Hills is a small rocky mountain range on the northwestern edge of the San Fernando Valley, located within the Transverse Ranges. Sedimentary rock is most common on the western slopes while granitic and metamorphic rock dominate in the east. Elevations in the Park range from approximately 950 feet to over 1,850 feet above mean sea level. Topographic relief is diverse and in some cases extreme.

Soils

The Natural Resource Conservation Service has mapped six soil series (Anacapa, Balcom, Chualar, Gaviota, Gazos, and Saugus) in the Park. These soils vary widely in depth, fertility, permeability, and other important characteristics. There are no listed hydric soils found within the Park's boundaries.

- The Anacapa series consists of deep, well-drained soils that formed in alluvium derived from predominantly sedimentary rock sources.
- The Balcom series consists of moderately deep, well-drained soils that formed in material that weathered from soft, calcareous shale and sandstone.

- The Chualar series consist of very deep, well-drained soils that formed in alluvial material from mixed rock sources.
- The Gaviota series consists of very shallow or shallow, well-drained soils that formed in material weathered from hard sandstone or meta-sandstone.
- The Gazos series consists of moderately deep to bedrock, well-drained soils that formed in material weathered from sandstone and shale.
- The Saugus series consists of deep, well-drained soils that formed from weakly consolidated sediments.

Vegetation Communities

Initial surveys by CDPRE Environmental Scientists identified nine vegetation communities (Figure 3) within the boundaries of the Park including chamise-redshank chaparral, coastal sage scrub, mixed chaparral, coastal oak woodland, valley foothill riparian (southern coast live oak riparian forest), fresh emergent wetland, annual grassland, eucalyptus, and barren/rock.

Chamise-Redshank Chaparral

Mature chamise chaparral is single layered and generally lacking well-developed herbaceous ground cover and overstory trees. Shrub canopies frequently overlap, producing a nearly impenetrable canopy of interwoven branches with very little herbaceous understory or litter. It is adapted to repeated fires by stump sprouting.

Chamise-dominated stands average 1 to 2 meters (3.3 to 6.6 ft) in height, but can reach 3 meters (9.8 ft). Total shrub cover frequently exceeds 80 percent, but may be considerably

lower on extremely xeric sites with poor soils.

The dominant over story species in the Park is chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*). Associated species include California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), eastwood manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa*), chaparral whitethorn (*Ceanothus leucodermis*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*). Chamise chaparral is found throughout the Park.

Coastal Sage Scrub

Coastal sage scrub systems are characterized by low- to moderate-sized shrubs with mesophytic leaves, flexible branches, semiwoody stems, and a shallow root system. Southern coastal scrub stands consist of a shrub layer up to 2 meters (7 ft) tall. Canopy cover usually approaches 100 percent but can be continuous or intermittent with bare areas present.

The dominant over story species in the Park is laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*) with lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*) also present. Common understory species include black sage, California sage (*Artemisia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), California buckwheat, and deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*). Coastal sage scrub is found throughout the Park.

Mixed Chaparral

Mixed chaparral (MCH) is structurally homogeneous brushland dominated by shrubs with thick, stiff, and heavy cutinized evergreen leaves. Shrub height and crown cover can vary with age, last burn, and precipitation regime. At maturity, MCH is typically very dense with greater than 80 percent

absolute shrub cover. Mixed chaparral supports approximately 240 species of woody plants. Composition changes between northern and southern California, precipitation regime, aspect, and soils.

Common shrub species found in the Park include chaparral whitethorn, greenbark ceanothus (*Ceanothus spinosus*) and Eastwood manzanita. Other associated species include chamise, poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), laural sumac, hollyleaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), California buckthorn (*Rhamnus californica*), yerba santa (*Eriodictyon crassifolium*), and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). Mixed chaparral is found throughout the Park.

Coastal Oak Woodland

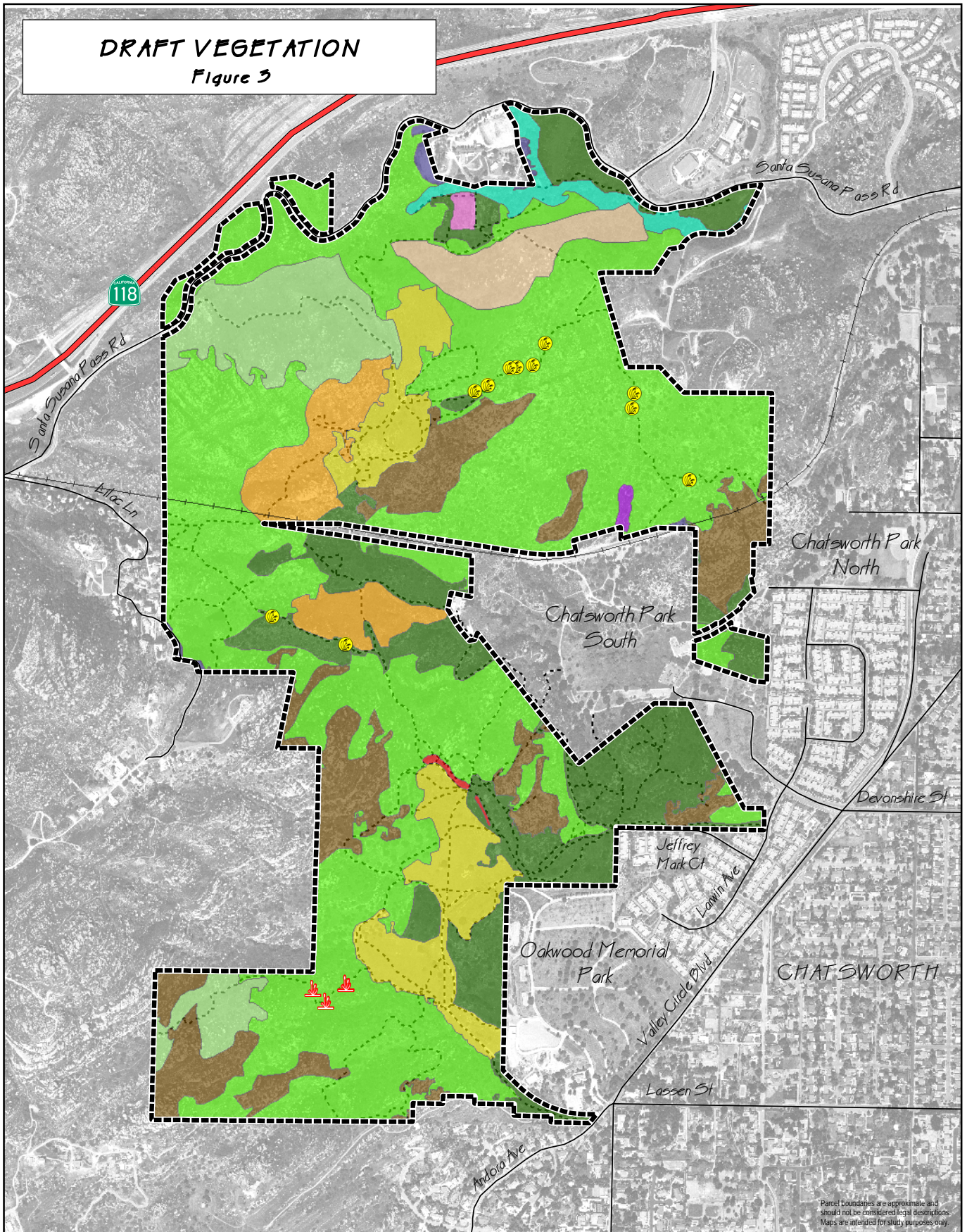
Coastal oak woodlands occupy a variety of Mediterranean type climates and are extremely variable. The overstory consists of deciduous and evergreen hardwoods occasionally mixed with conifers. In drier sites, trees are widely spaced and form an open woodland or savannah. Understory species vary depending on habitat conditions (soil, moisture regimes, etc.) and habitats juxtaposition to oak woodlands. Understory species composition is typically composed of grasses with scattered shrubs. Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) is usually found on moisture sites and extends further inland in southern California.

In the Park, coastal oak woodlands are dense to open woodlands dominated



DRAFT VEGETATION

Figure 3



Parcel boundaries are approximate and should not be considered legal descriptions. Maps are intended for study purposes only.

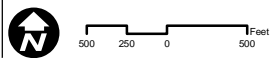
Legend

Draft Vegetation

- Coastal Sage Scrub (CSS)
- Disturbed CSS
- Annual Grassland
- Mixed Chaparral
- Eucalyptus
- Live Oak Riparian Forest
- Olive
- Rock Outcrop
- Developed
- Mulefat Scrub
- Chamise Chaparral
- Oak Woodland

- Plummer's Mariposa Lily
- Santa Susana Tarplant
- Existing Trails
- State Hwy
- Local Road
- Railroad
- Park Boundary

SANTASUSANAPASS STATE HISTORIC PARK





by coast live oak. The shrub layer is poorly developed and includes poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) and laurel sumac, toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), gooseberry (*Ribes* sp.), and occasionally Mexican elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*).

Valley Foothill Riparian (Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest)

Southern coast live oak riparian forest is an open to dense evergreen forest with coast live oak either the sole or dominant overstory species. They are commonly found on steep slopes or raised stream banks and terraces. They occur from sea level to 5,000 feet. The shrub layer is usually sparse while the forb layer ranges from sparse to dense.

The overstory is dominated by coast live oak with a scattering of California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), Fremont's cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), and white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*) also present. The shrub layer is moderately dense and dominated by poison oak with coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*), Arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), and black willow (*Salix gooddingii*) are also present in small numbers. Common species found in the forb layer include umbrella sedge (*Cyperus eragrostis*), purple nightshade (*Solanum xanti*), and California everlasting (*Gnaphalium californicum*). Southern coast live oak forest occurs within the Santa Susana Pass Wash along the northern border of the Park.

Fresh Emergent Wetland

Fresh emergent wetlands (FEW) are characterized by erect, rooted herbaceous hydrophytes. The roots of FEW vegetation thrive in an anaerobic environment and dominant vegetation

is generally perennial monocots. They are among the productive wildlife habitats in California. Common species found in FEW within the Park include umbrella sedge, mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), spike sedge (*Eleocharis montevidensis*), and cattail (*Typha latifolia*). Fresh emergent wetlands have been identified in the northeast corner of the Park.

California Annual Grassland

Nonnative grassland is dense to sparse cover composed primarily of introduced annual plant species. Many of these species also occur as understory in other habitats. Species composition is influenced by seasonal and annual fluctuations in weather patterns. Fall and winter rain causes germination of annual plant seeds, which grow slowly and low to the ground during cool winter months. Warmer spring temperature cause rapid growth and large amounts of standing dead plant material can be found during the summer months. Nonnative grassland is disturbance related and usually prevails in old fields or openings in native scrub habitats.

Typical nonnative grasses within the Park include wild oat (*Avena fatua*), ripgut grass (*Bromus diandrus*), foxtail fescue (*Vulpia myuros*), and fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*). Other species include red-stem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), short-pod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), and tarweed (*Deinandra fasciculata*). This vegetation appears to replace native grassland and coastal sage scrub habitat (most likely after regular fire

events) within Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park and are very dense in some areas.

Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus habitat ranges from monotypic thickets with little or no understory to scattered trees over a well-developed herbaceous and shrubby understory. It is more typically found in monotypic stands.

Stand structure varies considerably due to planting regimes (row for wind protection or dense stands for hardwood production). Tree heights range from 26 to 40 meters (87 to 133 feet). The understory is typically composed of introduced annual grasses and forbs. The shrub understory is usually very sparse or nonexistent due to the allelopathic nature of eucalyptus.

While not native to California, eucalyptus is an important roost, perch, and nest tree for raptors. Eucalyptus habitat occurs along the northern border of the Park just south of the Rock Creek Church caretaker's residence. Additionally, there are scattered eucalyptus trees throughout the Park, primarily along the borders.

Fire

Vegetation plays an important role in the fire regime of the Park. Fire regime refers to the patterns of fire that occur over long periods of time, and the immediate effects of fire in the ecosystem in which it occurs. Fire regime is a function of the frequency of fire occurrence, fire intensity, and the amount of fuel consumed. The frequency is determined largely by the ecosystem characteristics, the duration and character of the weather (if the season is drier or wetter than normal, etc.) and ignition sources. The

intensity of a fire is determined by the quantity of fuel available, the fuels' combustion rates, and existing weather conditions. Interactions between frequency and intensity are influenced by wind, topography, and fire history.

At least twenty fires are known to have burned through all or part of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park since the mid-1920s. Table 2 shows the Fire History of the Park.

Table 2: Fire History

Fire Name	Date	Acres
unknown	1927	386
SantaSusana-Vent.	July 1927	649
Manor Fire No. 144	July 1947	1,307
Scotty No. 110	June 1951	156
Twin Lakes	Sep 1954	698
unknown	Nov 1956	217
Santa Susana Pass	July 1957	4,733
unknown	July 1959	126
Devonshire-Parker	Oct 1967	23,093
Palmer Fire	Oct 1967	14,248
unknown	May 1970	15
unknown	May 1970	17
unknown	Aug 1970	43
Clampitt Fire	Sep 1970	115,537
Lilac Lane	Nov 1975	324
Oat Fire	Oct 1981	17,787
Farralone Fire	Aug 1992	43
Chatsworth Fire	Oct 1993	1,931
unknown	Aug 2003	+/- 16
Topanga Fire	Sep 2005	24,175

The information contained in this table includes California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) and United States Forest Service (USFS) fires from 1950 to 2003, although some fires before 1950 are also included. A small 2003 fire and the Topanga Fire (2005) were included based on data on file at CDPR.



Plant species and vegetation have evolved to survive repeated fires. Some of these communities, such as chaparral and coastal scrub rely on occasional fires as part of their regeneration process even though the short-term impacts of fire in these communities can appear to be severe. On September 28, 2005, the Topanga fire burned through the Park. The entire Park burned except for small areas adjacent to Chatsworth Park South.

Biological Resources

Botanical Resources

Research was conducted prior to field surveys to determine the vegetation communities in the project area and the potential associated specific plants. This research involved querying the California Department of Fish and Game's (CDFG) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) Rarefind Database Version 3.0.5 (CDFG 2003) and California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants electronic database Version 6.3 (CNPS 2005) database for sensitive plants and



Tar Plant

natural communities, reviewing published and unpublished material, and contacting knowledgeable individuals.

Vegetative community, floristic, sensitive plant, and exotic plant surveys were performed during the 2006 field season. Known occurrences for any special status plant species were obtained from the CDFG CNDDDB Rarefind Database, from surveys conducted in 2006, and from CDPR files and personnel (Figure 3).

Sensitive Botanical Resources Surveys

A total of 14 special status plant species and 9 rare natural communities were identified as potentially occurring within the Park's boundaries (Appendix A). Southern coast live oak riparian forest was the only sensitive vegetation series observed within the Park's boundaries during surveys. Additionally, Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) and Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minithornii*) were observed during floristic surveys. Both of these species are listed as 1B (Appendix A) according to CNPS, which means they are considered to be rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. All occurrences for both species were mapped and sent to the CDFG, Wildlife Habitat Data Analysis Branch for addition into the CNDDDB.

Wildlife Resources

A query of the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships Program using the known habitats found within the Park identified 391 potentially occurring wildlife species. This includes 252 avian species,

77 mammals, 46 reptiles, and 16 amphibians.

Sensitive Wildlife Resources

The California Natural Diversity Database Version 3.0.5 was queried to compile a list of possible special status wildlife and fish species present in the project area. A total of 14 special status vertebrate species and three invertebrate species were identified as potentially occurring within the Park (Appendix B).

No special status vertebrate or invertebrate species was observed during any survey, but mountain lion are known to occur in Rocky Peak Park immediately north (across State Route 118) of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Two lions were collared and monitored by the National Park Service and both of these lions were observed using the Corriganville wildlife tunnel (approx 400 m [0.25 mi] west) under State Route 118 (SR 118) at least 18 times. Both of these lions subsequently died. It is very likely that those lions were using the Park for foraging and/or dispersal.

A fresh deer kill was observed in the northern section of the Park during botanical surveys on May 17, 2006. It is assumed that a mountain lion made this kill since it is the only mammal (potentially found in the Park) large enough to kill an adult deer, though, a small pack of coyotes may occasionally stalk deer. Breeding, foraging, and dispersal habitat for deer, lion, and coyote does exist within the Park's boundaries.



Western Toad

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The cultural resources of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park were researched, documented, and inventoried by CDPR archaeologists and historians and by private consultants. The resulting data were compiled into the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park Resource Inventory (Appendix G, under separate cover). A short synopsis is presented below and in Appendix C (Cultural Resources in Context).

Archaeological and Ethnographic Overview

The archaeological record shows that people have been living in southern California for at least 9,000 years, with some evidence from the Channel Islands dating to 13,000 years ago. Most of the Native American archaeological sites within Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park that have been scientifically dated are less than 900 years old and fall within the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric periods. Although the Park falls mostly within the traditional territory of the Gabrielino/Tongva or Fernandeano, the culture area boundaries of the Tataviam and the Ventureño Chumash are nearby, and most of the Park is within a transition zone where these groups interacted.

There is a large site near the middle of the Park that may have been the ethnographic village of *Momonga*; however, there is some uncertainty as to the location of this village. There are other locations in the general area that also have the potential to be *Momonga* and it may be that the site within the Park is a satellite settlement to one of those. According to interviews with local Fernandeano and Chumash

peoples conducted by J. P. Harrington in the early 1900s, the village area in the central portion of the Park was called *Las Pilitas* and the old stage route that included Devil's Slide was called *La Cuesta Vieja* or *kashi'wey* (see Appendix D for definitions).

Historic Overview

Tales of stagecoaches carrying mail, freight, and passengers over the steep and precipitous *Devil's Slide* within what is now Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park are legendary. However, the Park's historical significance is more than that, having been a passive witness to over 230 years of western San Fernando Valley's transportation, settlement, stone quarry, motion picture, and crime history.

Native Chumash, Tongva, and Tataviam peoples pioneered game trails during late prehistoric and proto-historic times. Euro-American settlers would later take advantage of these trails. As a result, Santa Susana Pass would develop into a strategic, if precipitous means of traveling between the San Fernando and Simi valleys.

Spanish Colonial Period (1769-1822)

Early Spanish explorers and settlers first traveled along the San Fernando Valley in 1769. However, they chose the less restrictive *El Paso Conejo* corridor to the south on their way to Ventura. The latter would develop into a major transportation corridor, *El Camino Real* during the Spanish Colonial period, linking San Diego to Monterey and San Francisco. Santa Susana Pass would still play an important role in Spanish and later Mexican California's development.

The first recorded indication of Spanish interest in what is now Santa

Susana Pass was on April 27, 1804 when Father José Señan suggested to Governor José Joaquín de Arrillaga that there might be a viably shorter route between mission San Buenaventura and San Fernando via the Simi Valley. In his letter, Father Señan referred to possible route across the mountains as *El Paso de Santa Susana* “the Pass of Saint Susan.”

Mexican Republic Period (1822-1848)

In 1822 Governor Sola asked Father Ibarra to furnish men and tools from Mission San Fernando to “widen and improve the highway through the Santa Susana Pass” to accommodate ox-driven carts or *carretas*. In addition to carrying mission goods, the pass saw an increasing amount of traffic by local *Rancheros*, owners of large tracts of land moving huge herds of cattle and sheep between grazing ranges. This trend reflects a marked shift in the control of the region’s economic and political power from the former Spanish missions to private ranch owners. This was particularly true after 1821, when California became an independent province of Mexico, which secularized the former Spanish missions in 1833.

Interest in private ownership of the Santa Susana Pass area peaked in 1842, when Mexican governor Micheltorena granted fourteen leagues of land west of the Pass, *San José de Gracia de Simí*, to Manuel and Patricio Pico. Between 1840 and 1846 six ranchos, *Ex-Misión San Fernando Rey de España*, *Tujunga*, *El Escorpión*, *El Encino*, *La Providencia*, and *Cahuenga*, had been laid out east of the pass. Of these, Ranchos *Ex-Mission San Fernando* and *El Escorpión* reportedly extended into

what is now Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. However, subsequent federal land surveys rejected these claims.

There was some conjecture during the 1930s whether Lieutenant Colonel John C. Frémont had utilized Santa Susana Pass during the War with Mexico. Frémont was leading American forces to engage General Andrés Pico at the Cahuenga Pass to the east. The result was the capitulation of Mexican forces in California on January 13, 1848. However, Frémont’s use of Santa Susana Pass has been disproved.

After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, Mexico formally ceded California, along with the rest of its northern provinces, to the United States.

Early Statehood (1850-1860)

Santa Susana Pass’s strategic importance increased after California became part of the United States. As increasing numbers of settlers began arriving into the region, primarily during the 1849 Gold Rush, the territorial and later state and local governments realized the need for improved wagon roads between southern and northern California. Starting in 1851, road improvements were first made through the Cahuenga, San Fernando, and Tejon passes on the route between Los Angeles and the Central Valley. In 1858 the Butterfield Overland Mail Company initiated mail and passenger service along this route, linking San Francisco and Los Angeles to the East Coast.

The need to provide a more direct connection between Los Angeles and



the coastal towns led to the improvement of the former El Camino Real through the San Fernando Valley west to the Conejo Valley and beyond. Known invariably as the “Coast Road” or “El Camino Viejo,” its route basically follows today’s Ventura Boulevard and the 101 Freeway from the Cahuenga to the Conejo passes.

Improvements to the Santa Susana Pass Road (1859-1861)

Because the Coast Route was prone to flooding during storms and high tides, it was necessary to find an alternative bypass route. In 1859 the California Legislature appropriated \$15,000 towards improving the wagon road between the Santa Barbara County line and Los Angeles via Santa Susana Pass (Santa Barbara County included the present Ventura County at this time). An improved wagon road would also stimulate commerce and settlement between the San Fernando and Simi valleys.

In 1858 the Santa Barbara and Los Angeles county road commissioners awarded James P. Thompson a contract to improve the Santa Susana Pass road so that it could “accommodate a team of four horses pulling a wagon.” A local celebrity of sorts, while a Los Angeles Sheriff’s Deputy, Thompson had reportedly assisted in the capture of notorious highway bandit Juan Flores on or near Santa Susana Pass a year earlier. His past positions as Los Angeles County sheriff and tax collector may have influenced the road commissioners awarding him the contract. The new road south of the pass was also conveniently located next to an adobe occupied by his brother-in-law, Fabricio de la Osa. Fabricio’s mother,



Old Santa Susana Stagecoach Road

the recently widowed María Rita Perez Guillen de la Osa, operated a way station at the road’s southern junction with the Coast Road at *Rancho El Encino*. No doubt an improved Santa Susana Pass road would increase the family’s fortunes by supplying horses, feed, and other supplies for another overland route.

From 1860 to 1861, Thompson’s work crew used steel drills, picks, and dynamite to blast out sections of the sandstone hillside as they widened the former *carretta* trail. Despite the road widening and other improvements, sections of the road were extremely precipitous. Several channels and steps, along with evidence of drill holes, pick marks, and blasted rock can still be seen along several stretches of surviving roadbed, especially along the infamous Devil’s Slide.

The Devil’s Slide (1861-1895)

The steepest and most notorious part of the Santa Susana Pass road, “The Devil’s Slide,” begins at a point near the present Lilac Lane and hugs the

pass' eastern flanks down to an open meadow. The route was so precipitous that stagecoach drivers were forced to employ various means to prevent runaways: from passengers placing rocks behind up-going wagons' rear wheels; to adding strong ropes, chains, or timbers through rear wheel spokes to facilitate downhill braking. Locked wheels invariably cut furrows, which still exist in the soft rock. Evidence of drill holes, pick marks, steps, and blasted rock walls can also be seen in a section of roadway above and parallel to a deep drainage leading toward Andora Avenue in the Park's southeastern section.

The Road's Strategic Importance during the Civil War (1861-1865)

On April 6, 1861, the first overland mail stagecoach to utilize the Santa Susana Pass Road did so on its 72-hour inaugural run between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Six days later the outbreak of the Civil War disrupted U. S. Mail service between Southern California and the Eastern United States. To compensate, the Butterfield Overland Stage Company rerouted stages from San Francisco south to Los Angeles via the newly improved Santa Susana Pass wagon road. As a result, the pass road remained a strategic communication link to Washington, D.C. After the war the road continued to be the preferred route between Los Angeles and San Francisco until 1875. After which, teamsters used it as a viable shortcut between the San Fernando and Simi valleys.

"A Fine Spanish Family at the Foot of the Hills" (1858-1895)

At the southeastern approach to the Devil's Slide is another National

Register-listed property, the archaeological remains of the Fabricio and María de la Osa home and swing station. The site is historically significant for its association with the western valley's early transportation history as well as members of a pioneer west valley family. The family's patriarch, Don José Pablo de la Osa, was Mexican envoy to the United States. His son, San Diego-born José Vicente de los Reyes, served on Los Angeles' *ayuntamiento* or town council during the 1830s. Don Vicente and his wife, María Rita Perez Guillen de la Osa, were reportedly the first non-California Indian settlers in the San Fernando Valley. The de la Osas farmed and raised cattle as well as their large family at *Rancho la Providencia* (present-day Burbank) and later at *Rancho el Encino*. In 1851 their eldest daughter, María Manuela had married the previously mentioned James P. Thompson.

Doña María's brother, Fabricio de la Osa, along with his wife Teodora Davila reportedly lived in an adobe house at the eastern approach to Santa Susana Pass. After the death María Manuela around 1861, Doña Rita and her adopted daughter Mary Aiken relocated from *Rancho El Encino* to Fabricio's adobe.

From 1861 to 1868, the de la Osa family operated a "swing" or horse relay station at *La Cuesta* from 1861 to 1868. During this time, they kept a string of horses in a nearby corral, where they could be transferred to refresh arriving coaches before proceeding up or coming down the pass. They could also supply and maintain various tack and other gear to the stagecoach drivers as necessary to keep the stage line operating.



Archaeological evidence suggests that the station may have had a blacksmith forge. Besides an adobe and horse corral, the way station featured rock-lined cisterns that collected and stored runoff from a natural spring. Besides servicing the Butterfield coaches, from 1867 to 1875 the de la Osas provided horses to William E. Lovett and later Llewellyn Bixby, who operated a stagecoach line between San Jose and San Diego via Santa Susana Pass.

Thomas Robert Bard and William Seward's Wild Ride (1869)

The de la Osas may have come in contact with several noted personalities at La Cuesta. Among these were Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisor and later United States Senator Thomas Robert Bard, and former Secretary of State William Seward. They arrived at the swing station on Monday morning, September 22, 1869. Bard, along with Seward, his wife and son, had just traveled from Los Angeles, via the El Encino way station in a small two-horse spring wagon. Bard had been hand-picked to drive the Swards to Santa Barbara in time to attend a dinner held in his honor that evening.

Waiting at La Cuesta were two *vaqueros* from Bard's ranch. They attached their ropes or *riatas* to the wagon and guided it up the Devil's Slide. At the summit, they released the wagon, after which Bard proceeded downslope towards Larry's Station. Bard rode on for nine more hours, arriving at Santa Barbara in time for Seward's dinner. Bard's 13.5-hour ride was the fastest on record between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara during the horse-drawn era.

Bandits' Lair (1857-1875)

As mentioned earlier, the notorious outlaw Juan Flores may have been captured at or near Santa Susana Pass. Local legend intimates that other outlaws robbed the stages traveling through the pass during the 1870s. However, there is no documentary evidence that anyone ever held up a stagecoach running between the San Fernando and Simi valleys.

Simi Stagecoach Line (1874-1895)

Other less notorious visitors at La Cuesta were the drivers for the M. L. Montgomery stage line. Between 1874 and 1895 they shuttled guests from the San Fernando railroad station up and over the pass to the Simi Land and Water Company-owned Santa Susana Hotel. Located across the Los Angeles/Ventura county line on the pass' western slope, the hotel was a popular end-of-line tourist destination. In operation during a period of speculative growth, real estate promoters were eager to sell property surrounding the hotel. By this time improved rail service to Los Angeles via the San Fernando Pass negated the need for long-distance stagecoach service via the Santa Susana Pass wagon road. However, local stagecoaches and ranch and farm wagons continued to utilize the pass as a transportation corridor between the San Fernando and Simi valleys until the completion of *El Camino Nuevo* in 1895.

El Camino Nuevo/ Chatsworth Grade Road (1895-1917)

In 1895 the Los Angeles and Ventura County Board of Supervisors decided to bypass the Devil's Slide segment of the Santa Susana Pass wagon road due to its deteriorating condition. The new

single-lane road followed a much easier grade west of what is now Topanga Canyon Boulevard. Initially known as *El Camino Nuevo*, it was later referred to as the “Chatsworth Grade Road.” While a major improvement, the new unpaved dirt road contained treacherous hairpin curves, and was subject to seasonal washouts and landslides. With the advent of modern, gasoline-powered trucks, the road soon became inadequate. Instead of modernizing the road, the County Supervisors approved the construction of an entirely new asphalt-paved road dedicated solely to automobile traffic. Completed in 1917, the Santa Susana Pass Grade Road (the current Santa Susana Pass Road) greatly reduced *El Camino Nuevo*’s importance. In turn, the 1983 Simi Valley-San Fernando Valley Freeway (renamed the Ronald Reagan Freeway in 1994) has relegated Santa Susana Pass Road into a local-access road between Chatsworth and Saticoy.

Settlement and Town Building (1875-1888)

After the Civil War, land use throughout San Fernando Valley shifted inexorably from large cattle ranches to smaller single-family-owned ranches and farms. Dry-farmed wheat and fruit orchards were the dominant crops. After 1876, the Southern Pacific Railroad brought additional settlers into the valley, and provided the means to send their produce to markets. As a result, a number of small towns—Toluca, Burbank, Lankershim, and Santa Susana—sprang up. In 1888, the San Fernando Valley Improvement Company platted the town of Chatsworth Park.

Homesteading (1870-1892)

By 1870 latecomers having difficulty finding good farmland in San Fernando Valley were consigned to seek out marginal land in the surrounding hills. Between 1879 and 1887, at least five families filed homestead claims within the present Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. They included Francisco Miranda, Dionisio Sanchez, James R. Williams, James D. Hill, and Florence M. Mattingly.

These homesteaders built adobe and wood-frame homes, with sheds, barns, and corrals. After damming streams, digging irrigation channels and wells, and building rock cisterns, they had a reliable water supply to grow crops and raise livestock. Besides grapes, stone fruits, potatoes, and hay, they produced milk, honey and other agricultural products, the sale of which contributed to the west valley’s economic growth. Unfortunately, there is scant evidence of these pioneering homesteads within the Park.

One exception is the William Bannon homestead site. In 1892 Bannon and his family moved into the former De la Osa adobe. After building a two-room wood-frame addition, he restored two stone reservoirs, added fencing, a barn, and an additional house, and cultivated fifty to ninety acres of “rolling farmland” to raise seasonal crops and fruit trees. While the surviving stone foundations, terraces and cisterns mark the Bannon home site, he left a far greater impact to the Park elsewhere.

William Bannon and the Chatsworth Park Stone Quarry (1898-1915)

The Bannon homestead included large deposits of feldspathic or arkose

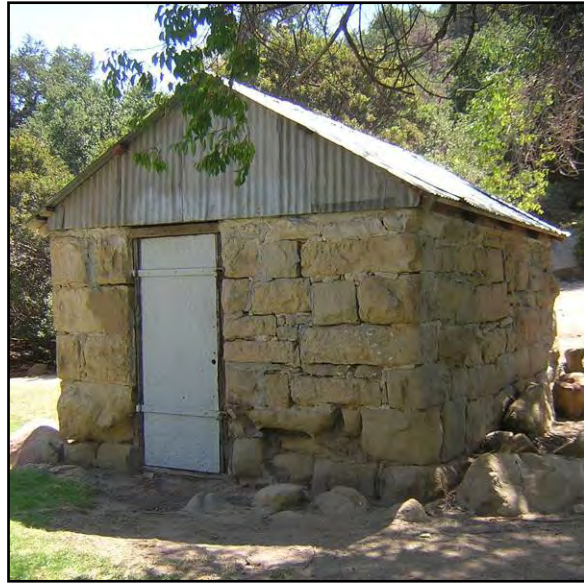


sandstone. A stone cutter from New York, Bannon hired and boarded a crew of fifty quarrymen to drill, blast, cut, and haul out tons of the sandstone via wagons and a gear-driven Southern Pacific steam locomotive.

During the Chatsworth Park Stone Quarry's 1892 to 1915 operational period, his crews utilized a traditional hand-drilling technique for quarrying sandstone known as the "plug and feather" method. Quarrymen would hammer a line of "plug holes" into a rock ledge. They then packed the holes with blasting powder. The resulting explosions would split the rock along vertical fracture points. An extremely dangerous operation, mistimed fuses often caused delayed explosions, killing or maiming an unwary crewmember. Dust and noise could also distract workers from falling boulders.

Evidence of these quarrying activities can be found throughout the Park's former quarry site, which includes drill holes, shattered rock walls, excavated pits and foundations, tailings piles, anchor bolts imbedded in rock, as well as wagon and railroad embankments. The latter belonging to a standard-gauge spur line connected to the Southern Pacific's switchyard and main line about 1½ miles southeast of the quarry at Marilla Street. From here the stone was shipped throughout the Greater Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino areas.

The moderately fine-grained quarried sandstone was in high demand for dimensional cut architectural stone as well as coarse irregular riprap. Thirty-four rail-carloads were hauled out of the quarry for use in the construction of the Angel's Gate Breakwater at San



Historic Structure

Pedro. One of the most important engineering accomplishments in Southern California's history, it helped to convert the San Pedro/Wilmington area into a major deep-water seaport by 1912. However, the quality of the sandstone had serious structural flaws: submerged stones disintegrated when exposed at low tide. As a result, instead of accepting thirty-four carloads of useless rock, the California Construction Company opted to buy out Bannon's \$10,000 contract by purchasing the entire quarry operation. In receivership by 1915, all of the quarry equipment, including the spur rail line, was dismantled and removed. There are still signs of its presence in the Park, including the fore-mentioned pits and tailings piles, as well as tons of broken riprap.

Between 1906 and 1920, there were a number of local rock quarries that operated concurrently with the Chatsworth Park Stone Quarry. Located outside the current Park's boundaries, they included the A. Charlton, H. Clement & Company,

Dillon, and Southern Pacific Railroad quarries. The latter is directly associated with the second phase of the Park's transportation history. Originally set up in 1900, the Southern Pacific Railroad Quarry provided ballast and cut dimension stone for the railroad embankment and tunnels cut through the pass. After the railway's 1902 completion, the quarry continued to provide dimensional stone until 1915. A corrugated metal roof sandstone block-constructed shed located in what is now Chatsworth Park South was allegedly used to store blasting powder and dynamite for the this quarry as well as for the tunnel construction work.

Santa Susana Pass Railroad Tunnels (1900-1941)

The Southern Pacific's new rail line up, over, and through Santa Susana Pass has also left an indelible mark on the Park's cultural landscape.

Although the Southern Pacific Railroad's transcontinental connection reached Los Angeles in 1876, rail service into San Fernando Valley did not occur until the early 1890s, when a number of farming communities produced enough goods to warrant the need for bulk shipment. In 1893 the Southern Pacific extended trackage westward from Burbank to Owensmouth (today's Canoga Park), and then north to Chatsworth Park. In 1900 Southern Pacific laid another line from Burbank to Chatsworth Park. At what is now Marilla Street, work crews marshaled men and equipment for tunneling through Santa Susana Pass. Associated with Southern Pacific's \$247 million dollar investment in upgrading its rail network at the time, the pass route (completed in 1904)



Railroad Tunnel

became the railroad's "Coast Line Gateway" into the Los Angeles Basin. By 1910 it was responsible for carrying ten of the fourteen daily passenger trains running north between Los Angeles and San Francisco, supplanting the arduous Tehachapi route to the Central Valley.

The tunnels are historically significant for their engineering as well as economical importance. The 7,368-foot-long Tunnel No. 26 in particular, which travels under Park property, was the longest railroad tunnel in the United States at the time of its completion. Economically, the tunnels contributed to the Southland's growth and prosperity during the early 20th Century, providing jobs for hundreds working on the tunnels or in support services. Their completion, along with the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913, attracted new settlers into the San Fernando Valley, which helped lead to its annexation by the city of Los Angeles in 1915.

The tunnels continue to serve as part of a major rail transportation corridor. They, along with the tracks and the mountains that they pierce, are also major rail tourist destinations and familiar subjects among railroad photographers.

“Valleywood”: Early Motion Picture Locations (1910-1970)

The San Fernando Valley offered early California motion picture producers a cornucopia of exotic movie locations. Directors were particularly interested in Santa Susana Pass’ rugged landscape for Westerns, Biblical epics, and Science Fiction movies and later television programs. The first recorded motion picture filmed within what is now Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park was actually a 1917 children’s fantasy: *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Besides *Jack and the Beanstalk*, five additional motion pictures appear to have been filmed prior to World War I within what are now the Park’s boundaries. Subsequent research may reveal these and other motion pictures’ exact locations.

Taking advantage of the situation were a number of local ranchers who converted sections of their properties into mock “Western Towns,” complete with false-front main street, barns, and corrals. Two of the most famous located near the Park were the Iverson and Corrigan movie ranches. Among the most utilized ranches in motion picture history, over 800 motion pictures and television series were filmed at these two locations. Three lesser known “movie ranches” in the neighboring area were the Bell, Berry, and Spahn ranches. Of the three, a section of the Spahn Ranch is located within the present-day Park’s northern

boundary, less than 20 yards south of Santa Susana Pass Road. This section of the ranch contained a mock Western town, with adjacent horse corrals. Except for the *Bonanza* television show (1959-1973), the ranch attracted mostly low-budget and television productions.

The decline of the Spahn Ranch mirrors the problems that eventually beset its neighbors. By the mid-1960s the movie-going public had lost its interest in Westerns, especially the formulaic television variety. Acerbating the problem was the construction of the Simi Valley Freeway in 1968. The freeway’s construction, which cut through the Iverson and Corriganville ranches, created so much noise that filming at the other ranches was next to impossible.

Spahn Movie Ranch and the Manson Family (1969-1970)

During the late 1960s, 90-year-old George Spahn allowed his ranch to attract real life “outlaws.” The most notorious was 35-year-old Charles Miller Manson, who, along with his followers, was associated with one of the most notorious and highly publicized mass murders in modern times. On August 9 and 10, 1969, several Manson Family members conducted raids from the Spahn Ranch which resulted in the horrific murders of seven wealthy Beverly Hills residents. Among them was motion picture actress Sharon Tate. Occurring during a time of widespread unease about the Vietnam War, the counterculture, urban decay, and racial conflict, the mass-media’s coverage of the Manson Family’s murder spree and subsequent high-profile trial in Los

Angeles, along with the so-called Zodiac Killer's activities in the San Francisco Bay area, evoked a pensive, free-floating dread throughout California and the nation during the late 1960s and early 1970s. A 1970 wildfire destroyed all the buildings associated with the Manson Family at Spahn Ranch.

A Community Remembers (1939-1993)

As a result of the influx of new businesses and residents into the San Fernando Valley both before and after World War II, unchecked suburbanization threatened the valley's rural character and sense of place. Statewide organizations like the Landmarks Club and the Sons and Daughters of the Golden West soon formed to preserve historic resources through a landmarks recognition program. Their work served as a model for subsequent generations of preservationists to follow.

Native Daughters of the Golden West Commemorative Plaque (1939)

On March 17, 1939, almost forty-five years after the old stage route's abandonment, members of the Topanga Parlor of the Native Daughters of the Golden West (NDGW), along with a large number of local residents and members of pioneer California families, including noted motion picture actor and California Beach and Parks Commissioner Leo Carrillo, hiked midway along the Devil's Slide to commemorate the road's historic significance. One of the NDGW's local members, 43-year-old Mrs. Minnie Hill-Palmer, was instrumental in organizing the event. Mrs. Palmer, whose family had homesteaded the



Historic Plaque

area while she was a child, offered to have a commemorative plaque affixed to a rocky knoll overlooking the road.

The Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (1969-1979)

While the NDGW's efforts were commemorative in nature, in 1969 local activists organized to preserve the stagecoach road and other historic and scenic sites within the area. Originally known as the "Chatsworth Beautiful" group, it evolved into the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (SSMPA), and sought to preserve the Santa Susana Mountains' "freshness, openness, unplanned, and unstructured beauty" by having it set aside as a regional park.

The SSMPA, along with other environmental groups, conducted natural, archaeological, and historic surveys and studies of the Santa Susana Mountains, especially the eastern and western approaches to Santa Susana Pass. Unfortunately, the 1970 wildfire delayed their work in the Santa Susana Pass area. However, the fires did help to clear brush, revealing more of the stagecoach road and other historic features. SSMPA volunteer guides were then able to point out and



explain the historical significance of several important features along the route, including the de la Osa swing station and Bannon Quarry sites.

In 1973 the State of California conducted and produced a “Reconnaissance Study of the Santa Susana Mountains” which recognized the historical importance of the stagecoach road and the 178 acres surrounding it. That same year, Charles Outland discussed the significance of the Santa Susana Pass stagecoach road in his book, *Stagecoaching the El Camino Real*. Synonymous with Outland’s publication and in preparation for successful local, state, and national historic site designations, the SSMPA published a booklet, *Santa Susana, over the Pass...into the Past* that was based on its research into the road and the surrounding area’s historic significance.

Another devastating wildfire in 1993 produced both positive and negative results: it did expose a previously hidden stone cistern and other historic archaeological features; however, in an attempt to clear access roads, Southern California Edison crews damaged a number of the historic and prehistoric features. The mitigated result was several archaeological and historical surveys and studies performed by private consultants and California Department of Parks and Recreation staff to determine the extent of the damage. Based on these studies and reports, a large body of information has been gathered that has contributed to a greater understanding of the Park’s history and the value of the archaeological and historical sites and features contained within its boundaries.

Post-1993 fire historical research and physical investigation projects suggest that there are more sites, structures, artifacts, and natural features within the Park. Many are associated with pre- and post-contact Native American activities, as well as later historic events and individuals associated with the Park’s more than 235 years of history. Taken within the larger context of its historical record, the Park has been witness to the ebb and flow of activities that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of California’s transportation, settlement, stone extractive and motion picture industries. These activities are also associated with the lives of significant historic individuals who played major roles in local, state, and national history. The changes they made to the land, along with the remnants of their homes and activities, have the potential to yield important information critical for understanding and interpreting our collective past.

Archaeological Resources

The earliest professional archaeological work within the Park began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Over the years, 20 Native American archaeological sites have been recorded within the Park (see Appendix C). These sites include habitation sites, bedrock grinding features, petroglyphs (carved, pecked, or incised rock art), rock shelters, procurement areas, and trails. Although pictographs (painted rock art) have also been recorded within the Park, those that still exist have been found to be historic or modern adaptations, painted with watercolor or oil paint. The rocks within the Santa Susana Pass area are highly erodable sandstone, and the preponderance of



Mortars and Cupules

36 graffiti throughout the Park has damaged and destroyed most of the Native American pictographs and possibly other features as well. Surveys of the Park have not been exhaustive and there may be additional Native American archaeological sites within those areas of the Park that were not examined during the resources inventory (Appendix G).

Historical Archaeological Resources

Twenty-four historical archaeological sites have also been recorded within the Park (see Appendix C). These date from the early homestead/stagecoach era of the mid-to-late-1800s up to the mid-1900s. They include sandstone quarrying sites, trash dumps, homestead sites, a 1930s work camp site, movie ranch sites, and of course the stage routes and associated building remains and features. Although the major use-areas of the Park have been surveyed, and it is assumed that most of the historic sites fall within these areas, there is a

possibility that additional historic sites may exist within unexamined areas of the Park.

Historical Resources

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park contains historic sites of local and statewide importance that have left indelible marks on the Park's cultural landscape. Indeed, the Park's namesake, the Santa Susana Pass Wagon Road (Old Santa Susana Stagecoach Road), is listed on the National Register and is a California State Point of Historical Interest associated with an important mid-to-late-19th century stagecoach route. The Park also contains traces of connecting dirt roads and trails from this period. In addition, within the Park is a railroad right-of-way, which travels through two 105-year-old railroad tunnels, that is an important rail link between Los Angeles and Northern California. The Park also contains the sites of mid-19th to early 20th century homesteads, where pioneering families hoped to eke out a living from the rocky soil. One of these is also associated with a regionally important sandstone rock quarry site. The surrounding high sandstone cliffs and bluffs also served as location backdrops for a number of Hollywood motion pictures and later television series. One area contains the site of a "Movie Ranch" that was later associated with one of the most horrific mass murders in Los Angeles County history.

The character-defining features of these historic transportation-related resources include the Santa Susana Pass stagecoach/wagon road, segments of which were scraped and hewn out of the living rock. A 68-year-old tile-



inlaid plaque commemorates the road's significance. Other surviving historic road segments include those of *El Camino Nuevo*, secondary wagon roads to Chatsworth, a railroad tunnel construction site, and the stone quarry area.

Contained within the Park's historic landscape are at least seven known homestead sites. The earliest of these, settled in 1858, contains the foundation ruins of an adobe and rock-lined *pilas* or cisterns associated with the de la Osa family-operated "swing station." Here, between 1861 and 1868, fresh horses were available to the stagecoach drivers before their climb up "The Devil's Slide," a particularly difficult climb up and over the Santa Susana Pass Wagon Road.

Later homesteaders who came to the area between 1879 and 1892 include Francisco Miranda, Dionisio Sanchez, James R. Williams, James D. Hill, Florence M. Mattingly, and William Bannon. United States citizens from Mexico, Indiana, Iowa, and New York, they built homes and raised families that helped tend their farms and small ranches. Here they grew hay, picked fruit from orchards, processed honey from apiaries, and raised cows and chickens for milk, eggs, and meat for themselves and local markets. Except for the Miranda adobe, which is actually located in the neighboring Oakwood Memorial Park, the remaining homestead homes and associated structures are no longer standing.

William Bannon's 1892 homestead site, which included the former de la Osa adobe, was also the headquarters for the nearby Bannon or Chatsworth Park Stone Quarry. The site contains

another house, several additional stone cisterns, a corral, barn, and bunkhouses for the quarrymen. Located southeast of the homestead, the quarry was in operation between 1892 and 1915. Evidence of quarrying activities can still be found throughout the former quarry site's historic landscape. Tons of sandstone blocks were cut and used as architectural stone throughout the Greater Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino areas. Additional tons of riprap went into the construction of one of the most important engineering landmarks in Southern California's history: the breakwater at San Pedro.

Between 1910 and 1970, the Park's rugged sandstone cliffs served as a backdrop to several motion picture and television productions. One area in particular, the infamous Spahn Ranch, once contained a mock-up of a Western town. On August 9 and 10, the murderous Manson Family Gang utilized the dilapidated "Main Street" as its base of operations for what is now known as the Tate-LaBianca Murders. Although a 1970 wildfire destroyed the buildings, the Spahn Ranch site still holds a macabre attraction for the general public.

Besides being associated with events and individuals who played key roles in the Park's more than 235-year-old history, these resources have the potential to yield important information critical for understanding and interpreting Southern California's transportation, settlement, stone extractive, motion picture, and crime history.

Collections

There are several reasons for a park to develop and maintain museum collections. One reason is to preserve

elements of the natural, cultural, and historic environment that are original to the site. Another reason CDPR acquires and maintains museum objects is to preserve documentation of people, events, cultural features, or natural features that are central to a park's purpose. A third reason is to support the interpretation of themes that are relevant to a particular park.

At present, there are only a few known collections that have been made of items specifically from Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Artifacts and archaeological specimens collected during excavations conducted by students from the University of California at Los Angeles and archaeologists from Statistical Research, Inc. (SRI) are curated in the State Archaeological Collections Research Facility in Sacramento. An additional collection of archaeological materials is currently stored at the Southern Service Center. These collections contain items relating mainly to the Native American occupation and use of this area.

Many other institutions in the Los Angeles region including the Chatsworth Historical Society Museum; California State University, Northridge; and University of California, Los Angeles house materials associated with Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. The development of partnerships with these institutions will enhance interpretation of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park by generating research and providing resources.



INTERPRETATION

Interpretation and education heightens and increases public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of natural, cultural, and recreational values. Providing experiences that are both meaningful and inspiring is one of California Department of Parks and Recreation's core initiatives. The educational and interpretive programs and facilities within Santa Susana Pass State Park aim to describe the innate characteristics of the Park and foster personal and lasting connections to the area. (Refer to the *Inventory for Visitor-Use* for more specific information about visitors to the Park).

Facilities

Facilities within Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park include three trailhead kiosks near Chatsworth Park South and one informative kiosk at Lilac Lane. All existing interpretive structures suffer from weathering, fire damage, and vandalism.



Interpretive trailhead kiosks adjacent to Chatsworth Park South

The interpretive kiosks adjacent to Chatsworth Park South consist of two generic CDPR panels and four panels specifically designed for Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. The Park-specific interpretive panels include "Messages in the Mud and Dust" (identifying the tracks of mammals who live in the Simi Hills), "A Pageant of Plants" (adaptations of Park flora), "Reptiles of the Simi Hills," and "Brushland Birds." Two general panels focus on the subjects of Native Americans and woodpeckers. Entitled "The Autumn Harvest" and "Voice of the Woods," these items were part of the generic panel program operated by the CDPR Interpretation and Education Division and are no longer available.

At Lilac Lane the fire-ravaged kiosk marked the "Historic Stage Coach Trail" and the accompanying bulletin board provides safety tips and information about local hikes. Old Santa Susana Stagecoach Road, which winds through the heart of the Park, is not formally interpreted at this location beyond the labeled trailhead. While no interpretive facilities currently exist along this trail, a 1939 plaque commemorating the "Old Santa Susana Stage Road" has the potential to inspire future interpretation of the historic trail experience.

Printed or Electronic Interpretive Material

Websites

The California Department of Parks and Recreation maintains a website (www.parks.ca.gov) that provides information about the CDPR system and individual parks throughout the state including Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Park-specific information includes directions to the Park

and the cultural and natural values of Park resources.

Free Brochure

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park has a small brochure on the CDPR website that contains a general map of the area and limited introductory and interpretive text. The current brochure includes information on the historic Old Santa Susana Stagecoach Road, Native American history, homesteading, plants and animals, geology, and outdated information about activities that take place within the Park.

Educational/School Programs and Interpretive Program Presentations

No regularly-scheduled interpretive or educational programs exist within the Park at this time; however, occasional tours and special events do occur. The Rancho Simi Trail Blazers conduct recreational and interpretive hikes within the Simi Valley area, sometimes taking place at the Park. At times, patrolling rangers provide interpretive information to visitors and equestrian enthusiasts give impromptu history tours. Events such as Earth Day are cosponsored by the City of Los Angeles and bring a few hundred people to the site annually.

Local Support for Interpretation

Many community organizations and regional institutions already support cultural and natural resource preservation, interpretation, and education in the Park. These organizations include, but are not limited to the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers, the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association, the Sierra Club, local equestrian groups, and the Chatsworth Historical Society.

Cultural information relative to the Park and surrounding community is made available by the Chatsworth Historical Society, located on the Homestead Acre within Chatsworth Park South. Chatsworth Historical Society has worked to preserve the Old Santa Susana Stagecoach Road, collect archival material and artifacts associated with Chatsworth history, and exhibit their collections at the Chatsworth Museum. Their collections include Native American artifacts, photographic material, ephemera, and books relating to Chatsworth history and the Old Santa Susana Stagecoach Road. The Homestead Acre also interprets the homesteading era of the Chatsworth area. While the Chatsworth Historical Society does not currently conduct interpretive and educational activities within the Park, the organization provides information that strongly supports interpretation and education at Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park.

Land Uses Surrounding the Park That May Affect its Interpretation

Interpretation at the Park may be affected in a number of ways based on the wide variety of land uses in the area. Land uses affecting—or that could potentially affect—the Park’s resources are described in other sections of this document. Land uses surrounding the Park may specifically affect its interpretation by influencing visitation and related program development. The potential influences on interpretation include:

- Diverse residential communities who utilize the recreational resources and reside within walking distance of the Park’s boundaries



- Transportation corridors including Santa Susana Pass Road, State Route 118, and the railroad tracks that pass through the Park
- Equestrian use of the Park and surrounding areas
- Future plans for the Rim of the Valley Trail and the community trail systems, such as those within Corriganville Park, Rocky Peak Park, Chatsworth Parks North and South, and Chatsworth Oaks Park, which connect to interpretive trails within the boundaries of the Park
- Schools and libraries within a 10-mile radius of the Park
- Proximity to and relationship with local, state, and national parks within a two-hour drive of the Park.

Frank Schepler Jr. Memorial Library and Chatsworth Park Elementary School are adjacent to the Park. This school, like 635 schools also within the Los Angeles Unified School District, is currently classified as a Title I school. According to 2001 data obtained from the Southern California Association of Governments, 291 schools are located within a 10-mile radius of the Park. These include 11 colleges and universities, 181 elementary schools, 26 junior or intermediate high schools, 15 preschool/daycare centers, and 58 senior high schools. Future interpretive and educational programs should aim to incorporate these schools and the needs of the surrounding community into future planning. Schools have the potential to increase visitation to the Park, enhance the knowledge of California's cultural and natural legacy, conduct education and interpretation within the Park, and inspire new facilities and programs.

Many local, state, and national parks have existing programs that relate to the interpretive topics, themes, and periods of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. One of these is the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA), an institution that emphasizes Chumash culture, geography, and native plants and animals of the Santa Monica Mountains through educational and interpretive programs. SMMNRA partners with Malibu Creek State Park, where visitors can explore native plants, Chumash culture, and TV/film history. The Malibu Docent Association works with the SMMNRA and provides interpretive nature hikes for inner-city children. Topanga State Park visitors can also explore wildlife as they visit SMMNRA trails that connect to Will Rogers State Park and Point Mugu State Park. Los Encinos State Park interprets the De la Osa family, who once had a home and swing station within the Park boundaries. Local parks such as Chumash Park reflect the area's Native American past. These are just a brief listing of the many institutions within a two hour drive of the Park that relate to Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park and have the potential to affect interpretation and education.

The development of stronger partnerships with institutions and CDPR affiliates will promote the neighborhood, regional, and statewide context of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, thus developing a network of interpretive resources and enhancing the visitor experience.

AESTHETIC RESOURCES

The aesthetic values of park land include its scenic qualities, notable landscape features, and character or “spirit of place.” Aesthetic resources, as discussed here, are essentially cultural values that become associated with a given place. They reflect both the human experience and inherent characteristics of the place itself. For long range planning purposes it is important to identify these values so that they can be understood, appreciated, protected, and made accessible for future park visitors.

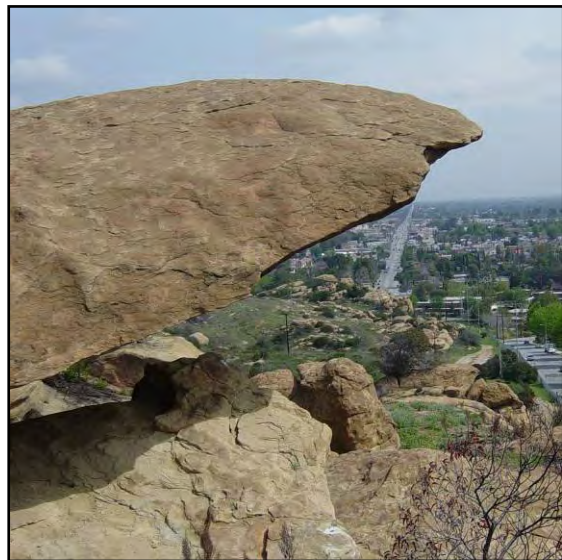
The landscape character of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park was described in a previous section called Spirit of Place. It was noted that the Park’s landscape was characterized by a steep, complex topography, weathered rock outcrops, and the imprints of a long cultural history. Massive boulders define much of the land’s rugged form and texture. The Park’s boundaries were drawn across this natural landscape, but they are more strongly influenced by existing land uses, ownership parcel lines, and jurisdictions. These factors set up a number of issues related to the Park’s identity and the perceptions, access, and orientation of its visitors.

Special features and landscapes were mapped and classified under the following categories: Topographic Features, Vegetation, Cultural Features, Access Points, Primary Travel Corridors, and Vantage Points. *Topographic Features* include primary peaks and ridgelines, regional peaks and nearby features, notable rock formations, riparian corridor/drainage courses, and a seasonal waterfall. *Vegetation* includes chaparral,

grasslands or meadows, live oak stands, distinctive individual trees, historic olive tree lines, eucalyptus groves, and coastal sage scrub habitat. *Cultural Features* include the Old Stagecoach Road and features related to it, El Camino Nuevo, utility lines, the railroad corridor and its tunnels, vehicle carcasses, rock quarry features (tailings, pits, and grading scars), utility roads, tanks, tinajas, reservoirs, rock shelters, and bedrock grinding mortars and basins, cupules. *Access Points, Primary Travel Corridors, and Vantage Points* were also mapped.

The aesthetic experience is strongly connected to our senses and perceptions, our need to recognize pattern, negotiate space, and to understand and order our experience in the environment. This said, the Park offers visitors significant challenges and opportunities.

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park has good regional geographic location. It is situated in easy proximity to a transportation grid of freeways, highways, major arterials and



Rock Formation

secondary streets. In recognition of their extraordinary scenic values, both State Route 118 (Ronald Reagan Freeway) and Santa Susana Pass Road have scenic highway designations through this area.

The Park lacks a well-defined entrance and arrival point. It relies entirely on a scatter of poorly-marked trail entrances, each unique in character, but laden with constraints. Four of them enter indirectly from other parks or properties (at least one enters from private open-space property). Three others open directly to a public roadway with no transition gateway or off-street parking. The Park's complex topography is further complicated by its casual web of unmarked trails and old roadbeds. Trails are the only real means of entering or traveling through the Park.

The Park's mountainous terrain offers a number of exceptional vantage or viewpoints. In addition to the expected appeals and pleasures of elevated views, these offer the best orientation to the lay of the land. Unfortunately, they are located in places that are accessed only by trails, so it takes some time and effort to reach them. They are generally found by happenstance, previous experience, or shared information.

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Little is known about historic recreational uses of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. There are general references to trail use for hikers, bikers, and horse riders, and a recent history of using the Park for geocaching. Santa Susana Pass Road is used as a recreational bike route as well as a recreational motorcycle route. Nearby Stoney Point Park is a popular rock climbing area. Angeles District staff report that the majority of park users come from within 10 miles of the Park, range widely in age, are mainly hikers and typically access the Park from Chatsworth Park South. Many visitors come from the surrounding cities of Simi Valley, Chatsworth, Canoga Park, West Hills and Woodland Hills. Nearby residents often walk their dogs on the Park's trails, although off-leash use is not permitted.

There are no developed facilities within the Park—no parking, camping, picnicking, or posted and maintained trail facilities. The Park is open for day-use visitors only. Most visitors use street parking or the lot in Chatsworth Park South. There is no overnight use of the Park—although there is reportedly some unauthorized after-hours use at certain favored party spots. No recreational programs have been developed for the Park. Occasionally, local trail groups sponsor organized hikes.

A summary of the predominant recreational activities follows:

Trail Use

The existing trail complex has an exceptional foundation of historic routes at its core, but after decades of

casual use and convenience, it has become a rather confusing web of pathways and roadbeds. In addition to the ever-increasing number of casual trails, older paths without regular use or active maintenance tend to disappear under growing vegetation. The Old Santa Susana Stagecoach Road is the Park's primary feature, but unauthorized trail proliferation, the lack of maps or trail markers, and inconsistent use of trail names and route descriptions make it difficult for many visitors to locate this historic feature.

The trails of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, although undesignated, are the only way to move around within the Park, and are the Park's primary means of recreation. True to its historic character as travel corridor and "pass," the Park and adjacent surroundings provide modern visitors a range of roads, footpaths, horse trails, and bike routes to negotiate the rugged terrain. This maze of trails is evident in aerial photographs which show faint traces of the many routes used over the years.

The terrain itself can be disorienting. Certainly it makes for exceptionally steep sections on some trails and encourages erosion. An initial trail and road assessment was done in the spring of 2004, and an *Immediate Use Trail Repair Plan* proposed designated routes and made recommendations for repair and use. A baseline mapping of the entire Park was undertaken during the resource inventory process. It included much of the existing trail network, a wide range of cultural features and sites (both historic and prehistoric) and key natural resource areas. This additional information



Trail Erosion

allowed a more comprehensive trail assessment to be made.

The trails of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park connect to trails in adjacent and nearby parks, as well as to portions of the community trail system of Chatsworth. Trail connections can be made to Corriganville Park, Rocky Peak Park, Chatsworth Parks North and South, and to Chatsworth Oaks Park (via private open space areas). Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park lies within the *Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor*, a mountainous geographic area designated by the California Legislature, within which "an interlocking system of public parks, trails, and wildlife habitat preserves" is to be developed and eventually linked together with the multi-use, long-distance *Rim of the Valley Trail*.

Geocaching

At least twelve geocache sites are located within the Park. A check on the "Geocaching - The Official Global GPS Cache Hunt Site" webpage



(<http://www.geocaching.com/>) showed that although five were created in early April 2006, they were visited by several geocaching enthusiasts during the two weeks following. The other sites were established much earlier, with at least two established in 2002 and 2003. Many of these earlier caches have been visited from 40 to 60 times in the years since. There is also geocaching activity involving the USGS benchmarks within the Park. These appear to be visited only rarely but their precise locations are also easily accessible through the Geocaching webpage.

Camping

There is no camping currently accommodated in the Park. In an effort to assess the need and potential for camping at Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, the recreational inventory focused on identifying regional camping facilities and specific locations within the Park where camping opportunities could be considered. Steep terrain and limited vehicular access (see Figure 4) make extensive development of camping facilities unlikely at this park. However, there are several locations that lend themselves to development of camping facilities—if they are sensitive to the idiosyncrasies of the site, appropriate in scale, and protective of the Park’s inherent resources.

The Spahn Ranch site offers opportunities for vehicular access and the development of related programs and facilities. Its history as an equestrian ranch and relationship to the movie industry offers opportunities to incorporate these themes into any future development.

Other considerations include the availability of potable water, restrooms, showers, and respite from intense summer heat, as well as operational issues such as staffing, safety and patrol access, maintenance of sites (especially trash and waste removals), and illegal camping. Within a 10-mile radius, camping facilities are offered at Sage Ranch, Oak Park, and Tapo Canyon Regional Park.

Visitor Support and Orientation

Visitor support, as used here, includes facilities like visitor centers, restrooms, parking, and picnic areas. Such facilities serve the needs of Park visitors and enhance their experience in the Park setting. The Park currently lacks a well-defined entrance and arrival point. Multiple entrances and lack of maps or signage contribute to trail confusion and make orientation difficult for first time visitors. The steep landscape of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park offers few sites suitable for the development of new facilities.

Many visitors come from surrounding neighborhoods and communities. They are familiar with the area and readily use available street parking if convenient, or come from home, or use the entrance from Chatsworth Park South. This Los Angeles city park offers a compliment of facilities that support the recreational use of state park lands, including a parking lot, restrooms, drinking water, and activity centers (community center, Hill-Palmer Homestead Cottage, and Chatsworth Historical Society Museum and Memorial Library).

With the exception of a few interpretive panels at one of the Chatsworth South trailheads, no CDPR

interpretive or educational programs have been developed for the Park. Organized hikes by local trail groups are probably the only ongoing interpretive activity. Some historic and other cultural information relative to the Park and surroundings is made available by the Chatsworth Historical Society located on The Homestead Acre within Chatsworth Park South.

equestrian lifestyle, making it a viable part of the local rural and agricultural culture.

Equestrian Activities

Equestrian activities are an important component of recreation at Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Horses are frequently seen on the trails in the Park and organized rides traverse the Park. The surrounding area is known for its equestrian lifestyle. It is estimated that as many as 10,000 horses may be present within a 25-mile area surrounding the Park.

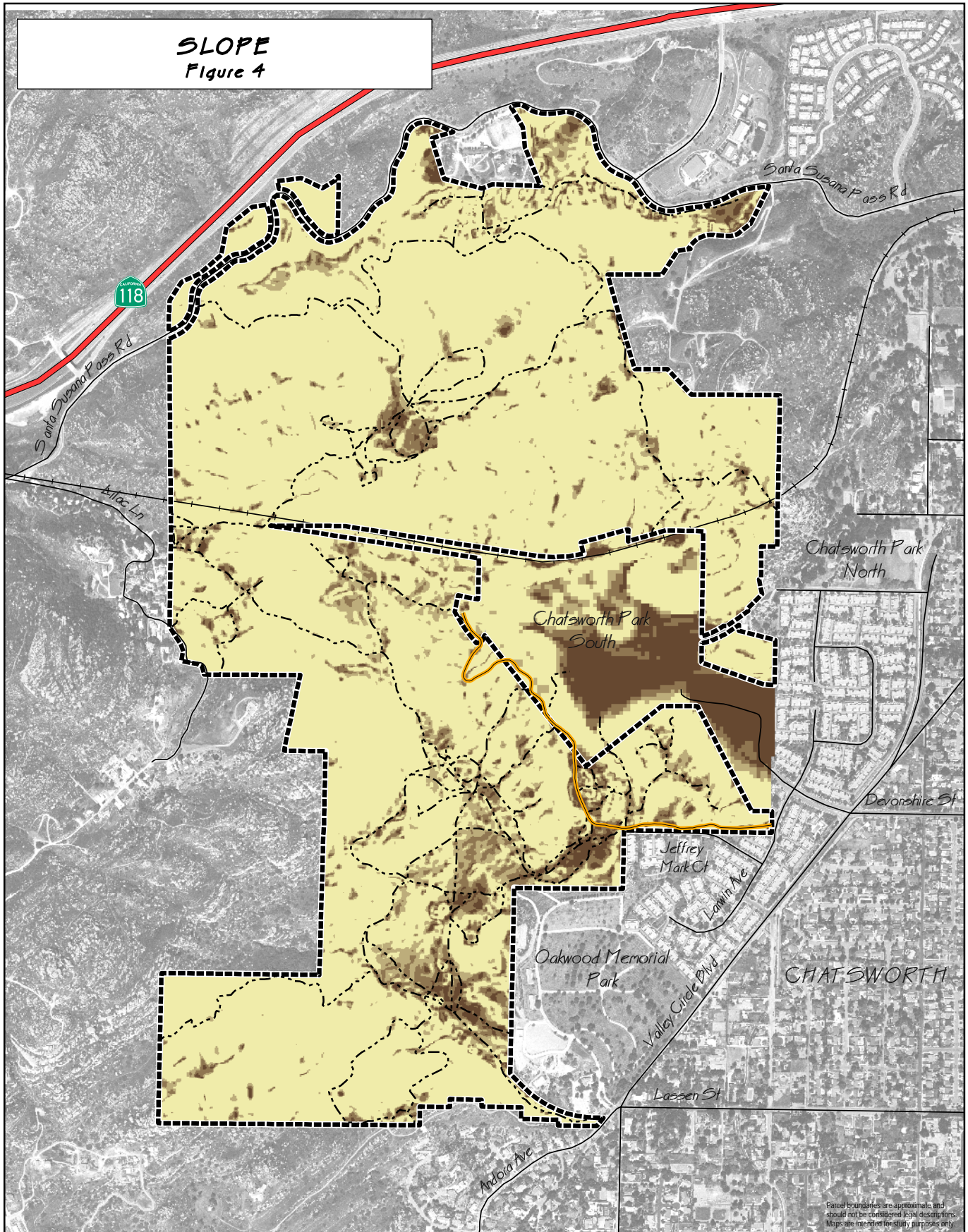
46

Horses have a long association with the Park, Chatsworth, and the San Fernando and Simi Valleys. Their history is traced to the Californio vaqueros and the days of early homesteads and settlements. Horses were used for the stagecoach route over Santa Susana Pass and tired teams were changed at the swing station once located in the Park. They were commonly used for transportation and agriculture before the advent of automobile travel. After which they were featured in the filming of western movies and television shows. This industry spawned an era of gentlemen's ranches in the 1930s through the 1950s.

Noted celebrities such as Roy and Dale Rogers popularized this lifestyle by riding horses through the Park from their nearby homes and ranches in this area. Throughout the years, many residents have maintained this casual



SLOPE
Figure 4



Parcel boundaries are approximate and should not be considered legal descriptions. Maps are intended for study purposes only.

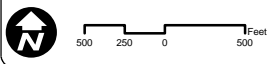
Legend

Slope (Percent)

	0-5
	5-10
	10-15
	>15

- Existing Trails
- State Hwy
- Local Road
- Utility Road
- Railroad
- Park Boundary

**SANTA SUSANA PASS
STATE HISTORIC PARK**





PLANNING INFLUENCES

Existing CDPR System-Wide planning influences that cross park and regional boundaries may affect planning decisions regarding the Park. The following represent such influential policies, regulations, and plans:

System-Wide Planning Influences

- Public Resources Code (PRC)
- California Code of Regulations (CCR)
- Policies, Rules, Regulations, and Orders of California State Park and Recreation Commission and the California Department of Parks and Recreation
- Planning Handbook (General Plan Improvement Team)
- Department Operations Manual (DOM)
- California Department of Parks and Recreation System Plan
- California Department of Parks and Recreation Mission Statement
- California Department of Parks and Recreation Access to Parks Guidelines
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park—Interim Management Plan

This management plan was developed in July 2000 to serve as an interim management tool until a General Plan could be completed.

With the approval of this General Plan, the Interim Management Plan will be superseded.

Santa Susana Mountain Project—Wildfire Management Plan

This management plan was developed in January 1997 by CDPR staff. This plan is to be updated as the Park

develops and when deemed necessary. The purposes of this plan are:

- To inform fire control organizations of sensitive park resources and policy.
- To become the local working agreement between CDPR and the appropriate fire control organizations for all activities related to wildland fires in the Park.
- To identify all activities to wildland fire on CDPR lands.

Resource Management Directives for the Department of Parks and Recreation

The Department Operations Manual Section 0400, Cultural Resources, is currently under revision. Until it is completed, Section 1832 of the Resource Management Directives and the CDPR Cultural Resources Management Handbook provide the policies, definitions, processes, and procedures to guide the management of cultural resources under CDPR's jurisdiction.

These directives, policies, processes, and procedures highlight the legal codes contained in the Public Resources Code, the California Codes of Regulations, the State Historic Building Code, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, a Memorandum of Understanding between CDPR and the Office of Historic Preservation, Executive Order W-26-92, and the California State Park and Recreation Commission's Statement of Policy and Rules of Order as they pertain to the cultural resources of CDPR's system.

Regional Planning Influences

The following legislation, plans, and programs address regional issues that may affect planning decisions at the Park.

Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor

The Rim of the Valley (ROV) Trail Corridor was designated by the Legislature to facilitate the development of an interlocking system of public parks, trails, and wildlife habit preserves within the mountain areas, within the jurisdictional boundaries encircling the edges of the San Fernando, La Crescenta, and Simi Valleys to the south, and the large portions of the Santa Clara River from its headwaters by Palmdale to the Santa Clarita Woodland by the City of Newhall to the north.

Plans That May Affect Planning Decisions at Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park:

- Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Interagency Trail Management Plan
- Rocketdyne Santa Susana Field Laboratory
- Rancho Simi Valley
- Corriganville Park

Demographics

Visitor-use resources associated with Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park—aesthetics, recreation and interpretation—are resources directly related to how people perceive, relate to, or use the Park. These resources were inventoried and assessed prior to starting the general plan process.

Accurate historic information on park visitation—who, how many, and patterns of use—was not available.

Annual visitation is estimated to range between 30,000 and 40,000. Rough estimates indicate that visitation rates at Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park have increased 25 percent in the last four years, except for 2002/2003 (which likely reflects the January 2002 System-wide fee increase). Los Angeles County, currently with 28 percent of California's population, is projected to increase a total of 19 percent between 2000 and 2050. Ventura County is projected to increase 42 percent over the same period.

Park visitation is affected by the seasonal temperatures as the average monthly highs reach the upper 80s and 90s from June through September and there is little shade cover. Most Park visitors during these months recreate during the early morning hours when the temperatures can be 30 degrees cooler on average.

Public Involvement

CDPR initiated the General Plan process for Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park in January 2006, with a scoping meeting held in Chatsworth, California. The scoping meeting was structured to familiarize the public with the General Plan process, to discuss the resource information and to start the scoping and visioning process. Subsequent public meetings were held in June and October of 2006, to present alternatives and a preferred plan.

Based upon public input at the meetings, additional focus groups meetings were held to better understand a few overriding concerns that were voiced such as: 1) increased traffic and vandalism due to any plan development; 2) wildfire concerns due to increased use and potential camping





Public Meeting

activities; 3) lack of visitor-use facilities and CDPR presence; and 4) the protection of the cultural and historical resources.

Focus groups meetings included the meeting with the Rockpointe Homeowner Association, the Chatsworth Historical Association, The Church at Rocky Peak, the Lilac Lane Residents, Equestrian and Trail Access groups and a Native American group.

Input was gathered via meeting notes taken by the Planning Team and comments cards distributed and collected. Also at each public forum, the public was encouraged to “jot down” their comments directly on presentation materials that were displayed at each public forum. Other forms of input came in the form of letters, emails, and telephone calls to the General Plan team. Public meetings were advertised in local newspapers, Association newsletters, and flyers posted at public locations such as Chatsworth Park South and trailheads. Upon establishing a mailing list from

the public meetings, additional announcements were sent via regular mail. At the beginning of the planning process, a website was established to keep the public up to date with the process and to allow ease of access to planning documents such as the alternatives and management zones.

Native American Input

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was contacted and asked to provide CDPR with a contact list of interested Native American groups and individuals. The list that the NAHC supplied included representatives from the Fernandeño/Tataviam, Gabrielino/Tongva, and Ventureño Chumash. Letters regarding the planning process and public and focus group meetings were mailed to each person or group on the list. Follow-up phone calls were made to ensure that the letters had been received. Native American input came in the form of phone calls, letters, and verbal comments received during the public and focus group meetings. Comments were generally supportive of CDPR’s plans for protection and interpretation of the Park and its resources. The main concern was for protection of the sites and monitoring of any future construction activities including trail work.

Park Support

Community groups and organizations including the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (SSMPA), the Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains (FPSSM), the Chatsworth Historical Society, the Chatsworth Women’s Club and the Sierra Club contributed to the creation of Santa Susana Pass Historic Park

during the initial years. These community groups and organizations continue to be integral supporters of the protection of the natural and cultural resources and the development of recreational enjoyment of the Park.



ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

The following is a summary of major issues derived from the development of the various aspects of the Park Summary and the Planning Process, particularly the public participation component. All the issues are intertwined, making the goals and guidelines and the management zones denoted within the Planning Section crucial to the immediate use and future management of the Park.

Cultural Resources

As described in the Public Resource Code, a State Historic Park consists of “areas established primarily to preserve objects of historical, archaeological, and scientific interest, and archaeological sites and places commemorating important persons or historic events” (refer to page 4 for the definition of a State Historic Park).

With such a designation, it is imperative that the Park’s historic resources are protected and properly interpreted, so the public can benefit from the Park’s cultural significance. Currently, this benefit does not extend beyond the local region due to lack of park infrastructure (designated trail system), facilities (for visitor orientation and visitor use), and educational/interpretive programs (lack of programs and staff).

Natural Resources

Reminiscent of the early California landscape, the Park is a natural resource sanctuary at the edge of one of the most populated regions of California. Although small in size, the Park retains a regional importance, as a linkage to surrounding open and green spaces for wildlife. Enhancing this linkage is extremely important to the

region’s natural resources as well as fulfilling the Mission of CDPR.

Visitor Experience

Relying on numerous “unofficial” access points popularized over decades of use, the Park lacks a strong CDPR identity. Further complicating the Park’s identity is that the most popular access point into the Park is from Chatsworth Park South, which is owned by the City of Los Angeles.

Although Chatsworth Park South seems to be a natural extension of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, CDPR cannot plan with the assumption of utilizing non-CDPR property. However, this planning document can be developed to work collaboratively with City and regional planning efforts as well as work separately, to ensure Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park establishes a CDPR identity and provides a visitor-use experience with statewide significance, reflective of the Park’s wonderful natural and cultural resources.

Recreational Facilities

Trail use is the major recreational use of the Park but due to years of casual use by hikers, bikers, and equestrians, numerous trails crisscross the Park, resulting in a confusing trail system for visitors.

Although a Trail Management Plan is generally the direct result of a General Plan process, all management plans are dependent on available funding and Statewide priorities. As such, this General Plan needs to adequately address the existing trail system so that immediate actions can be implemented to alleviate visitor-use confusion and to better protect the Park’s resources

while funding is sought for future management planning efforts.

