



Like nowhere else on earth. . .

CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK

General Management Plan Newsletter #1

October 2001

Named for the shallow sea that separates them from the mainland, the eight islands and their encircling waters are home to more than 2,000 species of animals and plants, 145 of which are found nowhere else on Earth. Isolation over thousands of years and the mingling of warm and cold ocean currents give rise to the rich biodiversity of these islands. Today, five of the islands and the submerged lands and waters within one nautical mile of each island are protected as Channel Islands National Park.



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Dear Friends,

Channel Islands National Park is one of America's newest and most complex national parks. As one of America's "crown jewels," this park will continue to serve as a model for park management, leading the National Park System into the new millennium. It is important that park resources, both terrestrial and marine, continue to be preserved and protected for future generations.

The current General Management Plan was completed in 1985. Since that time much has occurred, such as completion of the park's major land acquisition effort, expansion of park operations and visitor facilities, and an increase in the number of resource issues we are facing.

This year we begin to revise our General Management Plan that will help guide the park's management policies and direction for the next 15-20 years. Your participation in this plan is vital.

This new General Management Plan will provide a vision for the park's future, as well as guidance in resource preservation, protection, and management that will help us to achieve that vision. It will also help identify how the National Park Service may best protect cultural and natural resources while providing for visitor enjoyment of the park.

We want to communicate, consult, and cooperate with all individuals and groups of the interested public in this planning process. We urge you to take advantage of all opportunities in this process to share your vision and support for this magnificent national park. Your participation will ensure a strong public voice to help guide us and will result in a better vision than we alone could provide.

Sincerely,

Tim J. Setnicka
Superintendent

Channel Islands National Park



The mission of Channel Islands National Park is to protect and interpret the natural ecosystems and cultural values of the Channel Islands and adjacent marine waters and to provide present and future generations appropriate opportunities to experience and understand park resources and values.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLANS – WHAT ARE THEY?

General management plans (GMPs) identify the overall direction for future management of national parks. They take a long-range, broad, conceptual view, answering the question “what kind of place do we want this park to be?” GMPs provide a framework for managers to use when making decisions about such issues as how best to protect resources, what levels and types of uses are appropriate, what facilities should be developed, and how people should access the park. All concepts, strategies, and actions in a general management plan must be consistent with the reasons for the park’s establishment – the park’s purpose, significance, and mission. Federal legislation, such as the National Park Service Organic Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act, and National Park Service (NPS) policies also direct what the plan can and cannot consider.

The Channel Islands General Management Plan will **not** resolve all the issues facing the park, provide detailed facility designs and management actions, or guarantee funding for the park. Rather, this plan will describe the general path the National Park Service intends to follow in managing Channel Islands National Park over the next 15 to 20 years. Desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that would be appropriate for each part of the park, and the strategies for achieving those conditions, will be identified. General locations where certain types of development would be appropriate will also be identified. Specific questions regarding how these desired conditions will be achieved will be answered in new or revised implementation plans, such as resource management plans and interpretive plans that come after the general management plan.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and NPS policy, the general management plan will be combined with an environmental impact statement (EIS). The GMP/EIS will identify significant issues and concerns, present a reasonable range of management alternatives, and analyze the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives.

A general management plan

- provides general direction and basic management philosophy
- identifies resource and visitor use management strategies and actions
- can identify park infrastructure requirements, functions, and locations
- satisfies statutory and policy requirements
- identifies funding and staffing requirements
- does not guarantee funding
- will not solve all problems

WHY DOES CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK NEED TO REVISE ITS GMP?

The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-625) requires the preparation and timely revision of general management plans for each unit of the national park system. Channel Islands National Park's current GMP was first completed in 1980 and was amended in 1984 and 1985. Conditions have substantially changed since 1985. Among the significant changes that have occurred over the past 16 years: the National Park Service has acquired new lands on Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands, the condition of several resources has declined (particularly in the marine waters surrounding the islands), several actions are underway to eliminate non-native species and restore altered ecosystems, park visitation has tripled, and recreational uses and use patterns have changed.

THE PLANNING PROCESS - HOW WILL THE PLAN BE PREPARED?

There are five major steps in producing a general management plan. In the first step the planning team reaffirms the park's purpose, significance and mission; identifies issues and concerns for the park, and collects information necessary for the planning process. This sets the stage or context for the plan. Efforts during the second step focus on determining alternative approaches to achieving desired future conditions and resolving issues. Typically, three to five management alternatives will be identified. One alternative will be chosen as the National Park Service's preferred alternative, which is the alternative the National Park Service believes best fulfills its statutory mission and responsibilities. In the third step the planning team compiles the management alternatives and an analysis of the impacts of implementing each of the alternatives into a draft general management plan / environmental impact statement. This document is then distributed to the public for review and comments. In step four the team considers public comments, makes appropriate changes to the draft document, and then prepares and distributes a final general management plan / environmental impact statement. The final step of the planning process is issuing a record of decision, which is the official approval of one of the alternatives for managing the park. The National Park Service can then begin implementing the general management plan, as funding permits.

THE PLANNING TEAM - WHO IS WRITING THE PLAN?

A multidisciplinary team has been assembled to prepare the Channel Islands National Park general management plan. The team includes park staff, and natural and cultural resource specialists, planners, and landscape architects from the NPS' Denver Service Center (the Park Service's planning, design, and construction management office), and Harpers Ferry Center (interpretive planning office). Geographic information system specialists, editors, visual information specialists, and others will support the plan-



Isolation, combined with the passage of time, has made the islands a hotbed of evolution. Of the 700 different plants and animals found, 10% of the plants and 100% of the native mammals are unique to the islands. Giant mammoths become pygmy mammoths and gray foxes shrank to the size of house cats. Because of their small numbers and isolation, island plant and animal species are more vulnerable to extinction.



ning team. In addition, the planning team will consult with other knowledgeable people inside and outside the National Park Service and with the general public. In reaching decisions concerning future management of the park, the planning team will seek to reach agreement among park staff, NPS leaders, federal, state, and local agencies, Native American tribes, and interested groups and citizens.



A powerful bond between land and sea controls everything here. For instance, this kinship of island and sea controls where plants are able to grow, when seals are able to breed, or where fish spawn. Together, the water currents, winds, and weather create an ecosystem that supports a rich diversity of life.

PARK PURPOSES, SIGNIFICANCE AND MISSION

At the beginning of the planning process it is important to reaffirm the park's purposes, significance, and mission. We do this to establish a framework within which we can evaluate proposed actions to ensure that they are consistent with the mandate of the park.

PURPOSE: Park purpose statements clarify the reasons Channel Islands National Park was established as part of the national park system and provide the foundation for park management and use. They are based on park legislation and legislative history, other special designations, and NPS policies.

Channel Islands National Park was established in 1980 by Public Law 96-199. Congress created the park to:

- Protect the nationally significant natural, scenic, wildlife, marine, ecological, historical, archeological, cultural, and scientific values of the Channel Islands, including, but not limited to:
 - (1) the brown pelican nesting area
 - (2) the undisturbed tide pools providing species diversity unique to the eastern Pacific coast
 - (3) the pinnipeds which breed and pup almost exclusively on the Channel Islands, including the only breeding colony for northern fur seals south of Alaska
 - (4) the Eolian landforms and caliche
 - (5) the presumed burial place of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo
 - (6) the archaeological evidence of substantial populations of Native Americans
- Understand populations dynamics and trends in terrestrial and marine ecosystems
- Provide for visitor use on a low-intensity, limited entry basis to assure negligible adverse impact on the park resources

SIGNIFICANCE: Significance statements identify the resources and values that are central to managing the area and express the importance of the park to our natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements do not inventory site resources; rather they describe the park's distinctiveness and help place it in regional, national, and international contexts. Understanding the park's significance helps managers

make decisions that preserve the resources and values necessary to accomplish the area's purposes. Channel Islands National Park is significant as a unit of the national park system because it:

- Harbors in a remarkably small area the biologic diversity of 2,000 miles of the west coast of North America
- Preserves remnants of the globally endangered Mediterranean ecosystem, including some of the finest examples of California coastal and marine ecosystems, with many endemic terrestrial and marine plants and animals
- Preserves a prolific paleontological record and over 10,000 years of continuous human historical and archeological resources that represent a variety of cultures
- Provides the public with unparalleled opportunities for solitude, tranquility, wildlife viewing, appreciation of natural history, outdoor recreation and education – all within a few miles of the nation's second largest metropolitan area.

MISSION: A park's mission is essentially a vision for the future and articulates, in broad terms, the ideals that the National Park Service strives to achieve.

The mission of Channel Islands National Park is to protect and interpret the natural ecosystems and cultural values of the Channel Islands and adjacent marine waters and to provide present and future generations appropriate opportunities to experience and understand park resources and values.

The natural abundance of the surrounding sea and the rich terrestrial resources have attracted humans to the islands for more than ten thousand years. Island Chumash, early explorers and hunters, ranchers, and the military, as well as today's scientists and visitors have all benefited from the island's resources.





CHANNEL ISLANDS ISSUES THAT MAY BE ADDRESSED IN THE GMP

The Channel Islands general management plan will address a number of problems, issues and concerns to ensure that the park's purposes and mission are being achieved and to maintain what is significant about the park. These issues are only examples of management issues at Channel Islands National Park, and this list is meant only to stimulate discussion, not to be all-inclusive. General issues that are addressed in all GMPs include:

- What should we do to ensure that the park and its resources are adequately protected, preserved, restored, and/or maintained in good condition?

- What general types and levels of development is needed in order to provide for public enjoyment of the park while assuring negligible adverse impacts on park resources?
- What level and type of visitor use is appropriate?
- Are there any boundary modifications appropriate for the park?

Other management issues and questions that the Channel Islands are facing (or may face in the future), and which the GMP may address are listed below (in no priority order):

- Some cultural and natural resources are being impaired and lost in the waters surrounding the islands. What should be done to protect these resources?
- How should the newly acquired lands be managed? What developments and uses are appropriate?
- Visitor and administrative facilities in the Scorpion Valley on Santa Cruz are in the stream channel and are at risk of being damaged or lost in the future. What should be done?
- What should be the extent and character of the existing road systems on the islands?
- Park resources depend on habitats and processes beyond park boundaries. What can be done to assure their protection and preservation throughout the ecosystem?
- Managing the Channel Islands is very difficult from a logistical standpoint, and presents hardships to NPS employees. What can be done to address these management problems and improve the day-to-day lives of park staff and their families?
- Are the Channel Islands suitable for wilderness designation? If so, how should these areas be managed?
- Channel Islands' enabling legislation states "in recognition of the special fragility and sensitivity of the park's resources, it is the intent of Congress that the visitor use within the park be limited to assure negligible adverse impact on the park resources." What are the appropriate visitor carrying capacities for the park? How far should visitation levels be allowed to increase and maintain the "low-intensity, limited-entry bases" required by legislation?

Seabirds, seals, and sea lions rely upon these islands as vital nesting and breeding grounds. On San Miguel island alone, more than 30,000 seals and sea lions breed and haul out on its isolated shores. Rare plants thrive on the islands, such as the endemic Santa Barbara Live-Forever, which was once limited to a few individuals.





- Should more opportunities for public access be provided to the islands? What levels and types of commercial facilities and services are appropriate to support visitor uses?
- The Channel Islands have many special, unique cultural and natural resources. What should be done if there is a conflict in how these resources are managed? Which resource takes precedence?
- The Channel Islands landscapes have been significantly altered by past human use and livestock. To what extent should the landscapes be restored to a more natural setting? How much and where should historic ranching landscapes be maintained to preserve vestiges of the islands' ranching history?
- What can be done to better manage fishing to prevent impairment of park resources?

Please respond to these issues or any other issues you might see by filling out the response form on page 10.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE – HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Public involvement is critical to the success of the planning effort. Public input will help the planning team and decision-makers learn about the concerns, issues, expectations, and desires of visitors, interested citizens, people with traditional cultural ties to the park, interest groups, and others. The planning team will share information and seek public input at key points through the planning process. A variety of methods will be used to encourage public feedback, including publishing newsletters, sending public releases to the media, holding public meetings, and posting information on the Internet.

You can begin providing feedback by completing the enclosed comment form. Please let us know your concerns, issues, and thoughts on what should be addressed in the general management plan. After you have finished filling out the postage-paid form, just fold and tape it and drop it in a mailbox.

Giant kelp forests encircle the islands and host a wealth of ocean visitors, from tiny plankton and sponges to enormous blue whales. Nearly a thousand types of plants, fish, invertebrates, mammals, and seabirds depend on the kelp forest ecosystem of the Channel Islands.



You can also log on to the park's home page at <http://www.nps.gov/chis> or the National Park Service planning web page at <http://www.nps.gov/planning>. All newsletters will be posted on the web sites, along with an electronic response form if you prefer to participate electronically.

If you live in southern California, the planning team will be holding four public open houses the week of November 12 where you can learn about the planning process, talk to members of the planning team, and tell the team your issues and concerns for the general management plan. The dates and location of the meetings are listed on the back of this newsletter.

For more information about the planning process and park issues, contact Tim Setnicka, Superintendent, at 805/658-5700; mailing address: Channel Islands National Park, 1901 Spinnaker Drive, Ventura, CA 93001-4354; e-mail address: CHIS_GMP@NPS.GOV.


The schedule on page 9 summarizes the major steps in the planning process and opportunities for you to get involved. We are currently in step 1 of the process.

Please be aware that due to public disclosure requirements, the National Park Service must make the names and addresses of commentors public if requested. However, individual respondents may request that this information not be released. The National Park Service will then determine whether the information may be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act, and will honor your request to the extent allowed by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection.

We invite your comments and encourage you to use the enclosed postage-free response form to the right. The Channel Islands National Park planning team appreciates your interest and looks forward to hearing from you!



GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN SCHEDULE

where we
are now 

| Step | Planning Activity | Dates | Public Involvement Opportunities |
|----------|---|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Set the stage for planning: Reaffirm purpose, significance, and mission of the park, determine issues and concerns | Fall 2001 to Winter 2002 | Attend public meetings and express your interests |
| 2 | Develop preliminary management alternatives: Identify a range of reasonable alternatives for the park's future, and assess their effects, analyze public reactions, select a preferred alternative | Winter 2002 to Fall 2002 | Provide comments on the initial alternatives Attend public meetings and provide comments |
| 3 | Prepare and publish <i>Draft</i> General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement: Write document, describing the planning context, alternatives, and impacts, and distribute to the public | Fall 2002 to Fall 2003 | Provide written comments on the draft document Attend public meetings and provide comments |
| 4 | Revise and publish <i>Final</i> General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement: Analyze comments on the draft document, prepare responses to substantive comments, revise draft document as appropriate, and distribute to the public | Fall 2003 to Summer 2004 | |
| 5 | Implement the approved plan: Prepare and issue Record of Decision (ROD), prepare and publish final, stand-alone GMP, carry out the plan as funding permits | Summer 2004 and beyond | |

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS

Please come to one of the following informal open houses to talk with members of the planning team about your ideas and concerns for the future of Channel Islands National Park..

Monday, Nov.12th, 2001

City: Santa Barbara, CA
Place: Museum of Natural History
Fleischman Hall
Address: 2559 Puesta del Sol Road
(behind the Mission)
Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm.

Tuesday, Nov.13th, 2001

City: Los Angeles, CA
Place: Los Angeles River Center and Gardens
California Building
Address: 570 W. Avenue 26 (at San Fernando Rd.)
Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm.

Wednesday, Nov.14th, 2001

City: Oxnard, CA
Place: Oxnard Public Library
Address: 251 South A Street
Time: 5:30 - 7:30 pm.

Thursday, Nov.15th, 2001

City: Ventura, CA
Place: Channel Islands National Park Visitor Center
Address: 1901 Spinnaker Drive
Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm.



RESPONSE FORM

CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK

Please use this form to tell us your thoughts on how you would like to see Channel Islands National Park managed in the future and what issues and concerns you believe the general management plan should address. After completing your comments, please fold this form in the middle so the mailing address is visible, tape it, and drop it in the mail. Additional sheets may be attached. You may also submit comments by e-mail to chis_gmp@nps.gov. To ensure that we consider you comments, **please mail back your response by December 31, 2001.** Thank you for your time.

What would you desire Channel Islands National Park to be like in the future? Imagine yourself visiting the park 20 years from now. Describe what you would like to see and experience at that time.

What are your greatest concerns about the future of the park?

What issues do you feel the general management plan should address?

Is there anything else you would like the planning team to know?

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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TO MAIL BACK, FOLD HERE AND TAPE BELOW (NO STAPLES PLEASE)

Do you want to remain on the mailing list for the GMP? YES____ NO____

If you want to stay involved, you will need to send back this form to receive future information concerning the Channel Islands National Park GMP. Please affix your mailing label or print your name and address in the space provided. If the mailing label we used is incorrect, please indicate any corrections in the space below.

Name: _____

Organization, if any: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

- The name or address you have is incorrect; (please change it as indicated above or see affixed mailing label)
- Add me to the mailing list
- Remove my name from the mailing list
- Please withhold my name and/or address from the public record.

Please fold this form in half, tape it closed (no staples please), and mail it to the preprinted address. Should you have any questions on the planning process, please call Greg Jarvis at 303.969.2263 or e-mail him at greg_jarvis@nps.gov.

Thank you for your interest in Channel Islands National Park!