



Foundation Document Overview

Channel Islands National Park

California



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK is to protect and connect the public to the nationally significant natural, scenic, wildlife, marine, ecological, historical, archeological, cultural, and scientific values of the Channel Islands in the state of California.



Significance

Significance statements express why Channel Islands National Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Channel Islands National Park is significant for both its natural and cultural resources. The significance of Channel Islands National Park stems from the islands' remote, isolated position at the confluence of two major ocean currents, a region of persistent oceanic upwelling, and the border of two tectonic plates.
- The isolated and undeveloped nature of the Channel Islands makes them an exceptional laboratory for studying the processes of island biogeography. This unique setting also supports significant research and understanding on the islands' 13,000 years of interplay between humans and their environment.



Significance

- The Channel Islands preserve some of the finest remnants of the coastal Mediterranean-type ecosystem in America. The unique suite of plants and animals that have colonized the islands and their isolation from the mainland and each other over eons has resulted in the evolution of many rare, endemic species and subspecies.
- Channel Islands National Park harbors a prolific paleontological record. A record that spans from as far back as 120,000 years to a time when humans and pygmy mammoths may have coexisted on the islands 13,000 years ago.
- Archeological resources in Channel Islands National Park record some 13,000 years of human occupation and maritime adaptation.
- Channel Islands National Park's historic structures, landscapes, and sites represent ranching, fishing, hunting, navigation, and other endeavors from a wide variety of cultures.
- The Channel Islands have long been recognized for their scientific values. The extensive archeological record, the unique island ecosystems and taxa, and the isolation from development and human impacts contribute to creating an environment of great interest to researchers, educators, the public, and park management.
- Channel Islands National Park provides the public with almost unparalleled opportunities for solitude, tranquility, wildlife viewing, and appreciation of natural history, outdoor recreation, and education.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Physical Environment and Processes**
- **Island Ecology**
- **Marine Ecology**
- **Island/Marine Interplay**
- **Scientific Values**
- **Ethnographic Resources**
- **Archeological/Anthropological Resources**
- **Historic Resources**
- **Visitor Values**



Description

Located off the coast of southern California, the eight Channel Islands and waters encompass a diverse and unique marine environment. Five of the islands—Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, San Miguel, and Santa Barbara—and the submerged lands and waters within one nautical mile of each island, were designated by Congress as Channel Islands National Park on March 5, 1980. The park encompasses 250,000 acres of land and sea. A much larger area, approximately 1,400,000 acres of ocean, lies between the five islands.

Giant kelp forests, seagrass beds, rocky reefs, and submarine canyons in the park are populated with more than 1,000 species of fish, invertebrates, and algae. The park provides essential vital nesting and feeding grounds for more than 90% of the sea birds in southern California. Twenty-six species of marine mammals feed, transit, or raise their young in the park because they are near abundant food and are safe from disturbance.

The archeology of the park provides a unique opportunity to understand the historical ecology of Pacific Coast environments and the interaction of maritime peoples with dynamic coastal ecosystems. The oldest positively dated human remains in North America were unearthed on Santa Rosa Island. The native people—the Island Chumash—relied on the sea for much of their sustenance and manufactured tools and trade items from shells and stones. These islands continue to hold meaning for today’s Chumash people. During the last 500 years, European explorers, otter hunters, ranchers, fishers, and the military have used island resources. Historic ranches, military structures, and more than 100 known shipwrecks remain as examples of California’s heritage.

It has been a goal of the park staff to control or eradicate nonnative species that threaten the viability of native island species and function of ecological processes. The park and partner agencies and organizations have achieved success eliminating invasive mammals from the islands and restoring populations of native species, including the recovery of the island fox and the reestablishment of bald eagles and peregrine falcons.

