

The Value of Distance Learning



Connecting the Park to the People

People are drawn to the Channel Islands by their inherent beauty, rich resources, and isolated nature, yet their remoteness naturally limits the number of people able to visit. Consequently, bringing the park to the people takes on added importance. A core park mission is to foster an appreciation of the islands' unique ecology and human history amongst a diverse and growing population. Through Channel Islands Live, Channel Islands National Park and Ventura County Office of Education are joining forces to provide new opportunities for people to learn more about the Channel Islands and their place in the local ecosystem.

Technology Links People to Remote Resources

Working as partners, the National Park Service and Ventura County Office of Education are providing distance learning opportunities using wireless technology. Through live, interactive programs, students and the public are able to experience some of the remarkable resources of the Channel Islands. Participants view natural and cultural resources inaccessible to large segments of the population. This approach allows people of varying interests, ages, and backgrounds, some of whom may never have the opportunity to visit, to connect remotely to learn about park resources.

Live programs also provide students with opportunities for in-depth interdisciplinary learning supported by standards-based interactive curriculum. Educational research has demonstrated that students better understand key science concepts through multimedia and interdisciplinary approaches. Today's technology extends the reach of this program out from the islands to the park's mainland visitor center and into classrooms and eventually in time to other institutions of learning across the country.

Distance Learning and National Parks

National parks offer great value for formal learning in math, science, and social science. Broadcasts such as the Live Dive, which features the diverse kelp forests at Anacapa Island, have proven successful in teaching marine science. Significant stories about the islands' natural and cultural history are told through these interactive programs, enhancing understanding of park research and resource issues.

Distance learning programs also offer informal experiences for people of all ages, including new and diverse audiences. Distance learning reaches a much larger audience, including non-traditional park users, inviting them to learn about, appreciate, and ultimately participate in preserving the parks' rich natural and cultural heritage.