**BCHC-SD Meeting with Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Staff**

**12-14-2015**

On December 14th Terry and Martin Jorgensen met with Kevin Best, Sector Superintendent for Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. The meeting had originally been set up to discuss the possibility of placing a picnic table and benches at Granite Springs Trail Camp as a memorial to Garry McClintock, but we took advantage of the opportunity to discuss other current issues affecting equestrians and trails in the park.

Garry was a founding member of the San Diego Unit of Backcountry Horsemen and was an icon in the equestrian community for many years. At the time of the formation of the unit a mountain man/reenactment group Garry was part of had decided to disband and there were some funds left over- Garry gave those funds to the new unit and it helped them to get themselves started. After we did the memorial ride for Garry there were some funds left over, so the committee came up with the idea to approach Cuyamaca staff with the idea of the table and benches at Granite Springs. Garry and Ann were married at Granite Springs and Garry for many years was part of the Antifreeze Ride, which was centered there. In addition, Garry rode in the park for many years and was part of the construction of some of the trails. The only seating that has been at Granite Springs for many years is an old log that was cut and turned into a seat by BCHC-SD and installed in the 1980’s. (You can still see where the log has BCHC-SD cut into it, but it is barely legible because the log has been heavily vandalized over the years and is in pretty bad shape.) We discussed the possibility of placing a table and benches at the location with Kevin, going over the type of material it should be made of, installation, color, etc. It was decided that a concrete table and bench would withstand the weather and abuse at the location best and its weight would keep it where ever we installed it. A plaque from BCHC-SD honoring Garry would be placed on it. Kevin was supportive of the idea- we looked at some tables online and decided that Terry, Marty and the memorial committee will gather more information and present the park with a plan in the near future.

We then discussed progress on an issue we had been working on previously- the creation and posting of signage at Green Valley Equestrian Camp to inform non-equestrians and their families of proper and safe interaction with stock. Park staff have been placing non-equestrian campers in sites in the camp for two years, and there were some initial conflicts. Members of BCHC-SD and other equestrian advisory groups for the park met with park staff and expressed their concerns about the possibility that these interactions would result in safety and liability issues. While the park has continued to allow the mixed use, it agreed to place signage at the camp to inform non-equestrian campers and visitors of the hazards associated with stock and how to properly interact with them in the camp. Wording of the signs was agreed on by all the parties involved and they have now been posted in the camp. A new, larger ADA-compliant sign is planned at the entrance to the horse camp in the near future and will incorporate stock safety information with information about historic stock use and ranching in the park. BCHC-SD will be working with park historians and interpretive specialists to design the content of the panel. In addition, BCHC-SD is hoping to work with park staff to design signage that will be placed at trailheads in the park to educate non-equestrians as to the proper interaction with stock they encounter on the trail. And BCHC-SD Wilderness Riders will be working with the park’s interpretive specialist to develop programs to be presented to the public at both equestrian and non-equestrian campgrounds.

While discussing Green Valley Equestrian Camp we reiterated to Kevin the need for better connections from the camp to the park’s trail system, especially the trails to the east and south. We asked Kevin to work with the equestrian community to find ways to improve trail connections and find ways to make the camp more appealing to equestrian users, including the enlargement of parking areas and camping sites to accommodate the rigs most equestrians bring now days. In return we offered to do our best to promote the camp within the equestrian community and hopefully increase usage.

We used this opportunity to once again ask for an individual horse camp to be created in the north end of the park. Kevin assured us that the park is continuing to actively look for a location where the camp could be built.

We asked Kevin about the Roads and Trails Plan that is currently being developed for the park. He stated that information is still being collected and that before it was finalized there would be public meetings and a comment period similar to what occurred in the General Plan process. We asked that the equestrian community be kept part of the process and be given the opportunity to review the plan and give our input.

We discussed the annual BCHC-SD workparty at Los Vaqueros Equestrian Group Camp and set the 2016 date as Thursday May 3rd through Sunday the 6th. Camping for four days will once again be free in trade for one day of trail work, and the event will be open to all trail users, including non-equestrians. We have the date for the event reserved and will be working with parks staff to determine which trail we will be working on.

We also discussed the recent problems with the scheduling of an equestrian endurance ride on the same weekend as a mountain bike event. This conflict resulted in the cancelling of two days of the endurance ride with very short (two weeks) notice. We were told the problem was the direct result of the transfer and departure of the park contact person without an associated transfer of responsibility for scheduling the event. Changes have been made since in event scheduling and park calendars to hopefully prevent this from happening again.

We had heard, from the equestrian community and other user groups, that State Parks was initiating a policy where groups wanting to do events in the park would have to pay, in addition to permit fees and personnel costs, 15% of their gross profits to the park. We asked Kevin about this and he stated that it was correct. But he also stated that some fees and costs could be waived by the park if the groups were willing to do volunteer work in the park, trail work or otherwise, in trade. He stated no set scale has been developed and each group or application would be addressed on an individual basis, but that the mountain bike community had an event planned in the spring and the park was negotiating an agreement with them.

The meeting was positive and Kevin expressed his intent to continue to work with the equestrian community.