

**Oceano Dunes District
California State Parks,
Pismo Beach, California**

The Oceano Dunes District of California State Parks overlays the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex in Central California, the second largest coastal dune system in the State. The District includes Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreational Area.

The dunes remain a popular destination for visitors and locals alike. People pursue a range of recreational activities from butterfly-watching and ocean play to active pursuits such as fishing, clamming, and off-highway vehicle recreation. The challenge remains—how can State Parks balance high quality recreational opportunities with protection of environmentally sensitive habitats?



In 2018, The Acorn Group began working with District staff to develop a district-wide interpretation master plan. The planning work began with a kick-off meeting, followed by tour of Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA, studying the Monarch Butterfly Grove, Oso Flaco Lake, the OHV area, boardwalks, Oceano Dunes campground and visitor center, and two entrance kiosks.

We launched an online visitor survey, seeking visitor input on resources sought during trip planning work and the actual visit, participation in programs or events, preferred educational amenities, technologies likely used, topics of interest, basic demographics, and tips for improving overall experiences.

We reviewed the Parks' planning documents and took stock of existing interpretive media, including wayside exhibits and kiosks; interior exhibits; and brochures, online newsletters, and maps. We studied the Parks' websites and social media feeds and compiled an inventory of other park and museum settings within a 15-mile radius. We also conducted an educator needs assessment, interviewing school district administrators throughout Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties.

We identified new programs, facilities, interpretive tools, and media to help welcome arriving visitors, increase visitor engagement, convey messages, and protect sensitive resources. These recommendations include new weather-resistant sign kiosks, panel designs, digital media, sculptural elements that beckon and engage, and innovative programs that attract OHV enthusiasts and recruit them as stewards in the process.



We finalized the interpretation master plan and prescriptive interpretation action plan in 2020.