



Friends of China Camp (FOCC)

Operations Report for China Camp State Park Fiscal Year 2012-2013

Since the Operating Agreement between The State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation and Friends of China Camp was activated on July 27, 2012, FOCC has met its contracted financial and stewardship obligations each quarter which resulted in uninterrupted funding for DPR/CSP staffing, general operations and maintenance, protection of the natural and cultural features and expansion of interpretive programs. The Park was open seven days a week throughout FY 2012-2013.

I. Meeting Key Goals:

Keeping China Camp State Park open, accessible and thriving

FOCC's primary goals during the 2011-2012 "Save the Park" campaign were to insure that all the Park facilities would be open to visitors 365 days a year and that these visitors would have the opportunity to experience the exceptional natural and cultural features of China Camp in a well-cared for environment.

Prior to the current operational contract, three sections of the park were either closed seasonally, permanently or on week-days. Areas that were most affected included campgrounds and popular bay-front segments with restrooms. These areas were reopened and made accessible to visitors along with the trails and other day-use areas of the Park.

II. Revenue Building and Financial Oversight

a. Improved park use fee collection technology.

The on-going operational costs of running China Camp State Park required the implementation of day-use fees at the Park. FOCC established new day-

use and parking fees and annual passes which are collectible via new strategically placed VenTek pay-stations that accept both cash and credit cards. Passes could also be purchased at the FOCC website. Iron-rangers were maintained which accept cash and checks. These payment options offer convenient choices to park visitors. Longer hours of operation have resulted in increased park use and funding potential. FOCC is promoting reserved fee-based, day-use opportunities at existing and reopened sites for recreational programs and varied activities.

b. New financial accounting systems for tracking real data

FOCC collaborated closely with CSP and MSPA to insure compatibility among the financial tracking systems. We purchased the necessary tools to track revenues/expenses and more accurately estimate future financial needs using Quickbooks for Non-Profits which is compatible with Marin State Parks Association programs. Quickbooks for Non-Profits was also purchased to provide financial/operational data needed for matching AB 1478 funds and improved accounting.

c. Matching Funds

As a result of Legislative Action in the 2012-2013 FY, funds from the State are being made available to FOCC which will match the generous donations from the Community, including individuals, foundations, other non-profit organizations and businesses that were received during the Save the Park Campaign and going forward. Credits for matched funds will also be applied to thousands of hours of volunteer service.

III. Day to Day Operational Functions, Staffing

Regular California State Parks CSP/FOCC operational meetings and working group meetings are in place to share information, resolve issues and make decision regarding day to day operations

a. Collaboration and Division of Duties between FOCC and CSP

Operating the Park under the terms of the operational contract between DPR and FOCC has been a new experience for both entities and required ongoing clarification of duties and procedures and establishment of effective communication channels.

b. State Park staffing

The following California State Park positions were funded:

- 1 full time Peace Officer/Park Ranger
- 2 State Park Aides
- 1 full time senior maintenance position
- 2 seasonal maintenance personnel

c. Operations handled through volunteer support

We have no paid positions to assist in the FOCC segment of operational responsibilities. Core volunteers handled such responsibilities as collection of park-user fees, vendor contracts, Park use permitting and special events, educational/interpretive programs as well as oversight, strategic planning, administration needs, financial planning, accounting, fundraising, volunteer coordination and community relations among others.

IV. Maintenance, Stewardship and Capital Improvement

a. Park Informational Signage

Fourteen new signs were installed to inform the public of the change in operational responsibilities to FOCC and to inform visitors of the newly implemented fee structure plus directions for making payments. Signs are placed strategically in the Park, including at all new and previously existing pay locations. All signs contain FOCC contact information.

b. New FOCC office equipment to handle park operations

Office space dedicated to FOCC operations was located in the Ranger Station. Necessary rewiring was completed to accommodate computer, printer and lighting needs.

c. Trail survey work

A GPS system has been developed to more precisely identify the location of reported emergencies and to pin-point areas on the 15 miles of park trails that require maintenance. The system also provides information that helps

FOCC/CSP plan for needed trail and grounds improvements over the long term. A Trail Survey of Shoreline Trail has been completed and will be used by CSP and FOCC for planning appropriate treatment for each segment of trail. Similar Trail Survey work will begin on Bayview and Oak Ridge Trails as well.

d. Campground expansion

The campgrounds can now better serve the public by accommodating overnight camping 365 days a year. The campground was reconfigured to accommodate a total of 72 more campers per day including a new group campsite, opened in early May, which provides space for forty campers. Both school and scouting groups have used this site to date. Four individual walk-in campsites, with a capacity of eight campers per site, were also added.

e. Water system repairs

Long standing water leaks were located and repaired, thereby reducing utility costs and reducing water usage. We began discussions with Marin Municipal Water District re: evaluating rate tiers to see if we can obtain reduced rates as park operator. Changes to monthly water allocations have been made to more accurately reflect usage in order to reduce Tier 3 charges.

f. Addressing Vandalism

FOCC began partnering with Marin County Bicycle Coalition to address illegal trails and prevention of bike related problems. Rehabilitation of damaged areas was accomplished through the efforts of park staff, the Coalition and other volunteers. Expanded volunteer foot and bike patrols also provide a visible deterrent and are able to report problem areas in a timely manner

g. Village Improvements

FOCC led a number of volunteer work days directed towards the repair and stabilization of cultural resources at China Camp Village. These included the reconstruction of decks, roof, and structural undergirding in three of the historic fisherman's shacks in the village. FOCC volunteers also rebuilt and replaced the pier ladders, reinforced the structure supporting the historic water tank, and stabilized the historic fish processing machinery on site. FOCC work parties removed four full dumpsters of debris from the village, as well as a hazardous Eucalyptus tree threatening both public safety and historic cultural resources at the village.

v. Web Site refocusing and expansion www.friendsofchinacamp.org

As FOCC shifted its focus from saving the park to providing visitor services, interpretive/educational materials, and event calendaring, our website was changed and improved to accommodate this shift. It includes information on park amenities, fees, reservations, park programs, and in-depth natural and cultural history. Information regarding how community members may become involved as volunteers and supporters was emphasized. A second website was opened in January 2013 to provide information solely about the park and its use. The two sites were merged in February 2013 to facilitate a more centralized and inclusive venue for connecting with the Park, its services and its unique features.

VI. Volunteer Services

FOCC worked with CSP in expanding the Volunteers in Parks Program at China Camp which provided certified volunteers who supported and participated in the new Natural History Docent program, in Ranger Station coverage, in expanded Foot Trail Patrol and Village Docent activities, and in Bike Patrol reformation. They and other volunteers work closely with the CSPF Park Champions programs which add much needed trail work and other vital projects. Other FOCC volunteers are regularly involved in handling administrative duties, maintenance projects, in working groups and in the development and implementation of educational programs.

a. Park Champions Volunteer Workdays (CSPF Program)

Five CSP/FOCC volunteers were trained by CSPF as workday project leaders. Four Park Champion workdays, sponsored and promoted by the California State Parks Foundation, were planned and implemented to address China Camp needs such as trail maintenance, erosion control and vegetation clearance, fence repairs, etc. Each workday brought in volunteers valuable to the stewardship of park lands and structures.

b. Outreach Events

FOCC staffed information/outreach booths at a number of off-site events including Earth Day (4/13), BAEER Fair (1/13). Tam Jam (6/13) and on-site events Coastal Cleanup Day (9/12), MCCA Harvest Moon Festival (9/12), Marin Marathon (3/13), Bike-Bell table with MCBC (4/13) and Ales & Trails (6/13).

c. Board Development and Participation

In addition to monthly working meetings, members of the FOCC Board participated in the annual Park Advocacy Day sponsored by the California State Parks Foundation, the annual California League of Park Associations (CALPA) Conference and in the Center for Volunteers and Nonprofit Leadership programs.

VI. Interpretive / Educational Programs

a. Renovation, expansion and staffing of the Natural History Center

An existing natural history display area at the Ranger Station was developed into the Natural History Center with enhanced interpretive displays and materials. The room was planned, painted and renovated as a joint project with Park staff and volunteers. The project was funded by a generous grant from a FOCC volunteer.

b. Natural History Interpretive Programs

Training Series: A series of natural history training programs were planned and implemented during the year for potential natural history docents and other volunteers who regularly have contact with visitors.

Nature Walks: Natural History Interpretive volunteers offered free walks for the public for the past year, averaging two per month. Both adults and children attend programs.

Campfire Programs: From May through August, Natural History volunteers provided between three and four campfire programs per month for campers at Back Ranch Meadows. These were supplemented by an astronomy evening led by a professional astronomer. During the Fall and Winter months, campfire programs were offered as we had enough campers and/or upon request.

c. Village Museum Docent Services

Docents, including three new volunteers, with one who speaks Mandarin and Cantonese, staffed the Village Museum on weekends and other times by appointment. They provided information about the historic significance of the area to casual visitors as well as leading scheduled tours for groups from

schools, Scouts, social and senior groups and others. These were local to national groups including history teachers from Connecticut on a tour of western historic places. A significant increase in Chinese speaking groups and visitors from the Bay Area and as far away as China occurred, in part, because of strong communication established with Chinese media which sent numerous reporters for interviews and China Camp coverage.

d. College level course on China Camp State Park's cultural and natural history

In July 2012, a new history course developed by FOCC, "*China Camp State Park: A Unique Cultural and Natural Resource*" was presented through the Community Education Department, College of Marin, with one class on campus and a field trip to China Camp. Speakers included FOCC/VIPP cultural and natural history docents, CCSP Interpreter Rangers and a scientist/educator from the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). Because of its success, we were invited to present a second course in May 2013.

e. Interpretive Signage Project

FOCC's first interpretive signage project in partnership with a local high school, the Marin School of Environmental Leadership, and CSP is nearing completion. Students in the program, guided by experts in the relevant areas, developed eleven new interpretive signs related to Miwok culture and history at the park. They are being vetted by State Parks Interpretive staff, and will be sited along Shoreline Trail leading to Miwok Meadows, and at Bullhead Flats. The project incurred minimal expense, through the use of recycled materials and volunteer time. It has provided valuable experience needed to pursue a second, larger and more complex multi-language self-guided project at The Village which is planned for the second contract year.

f. Schools Presentations and Field Trips

Despite minimal outreach (due to volunteer and staff time limitations), China Camp continued, by request, to provide both in-school interpretive programs and field trips for a number of schools, after-school programs, Girl and Boy Scout groups. Among these have been the Wade Thomas School, Venetia Valley k-8, Marin Horizon and others.

g. Archival Project

For the spring 2013 semester (January to May), three students from the Dominican University of California reviewed and organized archival materials stored at the ranger station. These materials included newspaper stories, magazine articles, academic research and family historical documents from Frank Quan's personal collection. The Students, with assistance of a graduate student from the University of San Francisco, then digitized and stored the documents on an external hard drive that is now maintained and accessible at the ranger station for future academic research. In addition, the students took part in an oral history project with Mr. Quan, who was born at China Camp in 1926 and still lives there today. Based on their own historical research about China Camp, the students structured interview questions for Mr. Quan. Videos were made of the interviews which include information about the Quan family coming to China Camp in 1890s and their involvement in the shrimping and sport fishing industries up to the present day. The oral history is now part of the digital archive.

VII. Special Events

The first year of FOCC operations focused primarily on operational needs. However we were able to offer the following events which were free to the public except for parking fees and optional food and China Camp related purchases.

- a. Heritage Day** Aug. 17, 2012, This annual family oriented event celebrating the cultural history of China Camp State Park was of special significance this year because the threat of closing was averted.
- b. Film Nights in the Park** Sept. 8, 2012 and June 22, 2013, These events offered visitors a chance to experience the Park at night along the scenic San Pablo Bay at the historic village while viewing quality films.
- c. China Camp Celebration** Oct. 14, 2012, This event was a thank you to the community of financial supporters and volunteers who made the Operational Agreement possible.
- d. China Camp Signing Ceremony** Feb. 16, 2013. The signing of an amendment to the Operational Agreement added matching funding to help keep open Olompali and Tomales Bay State Parks.

- e. **FOCC Annual Members Meeting** May, 2013, This annual meeting was open to all FOCC members and included an update regarding operations as well as Board Membership elections.

VIII. Building Partnerships

a. New and expanded Partnerships and joint projects

During the Save the Park campaign, numerous alliances were formed which continued in support of operations and enhanced visitor experiences in recreation, natural and cultural history and park appreciation. These groups include cultural associations, educational institutions at various levels, conservation organizations, historical societies, community services groups, foundations, clubs and government agencies. A few of these include Dominican University of California, College of Marin, Marin School of Environmental Leadership, Marin Chinese Cultural Association, Marin County Bicycle Coalition, National Estuarine Research Reserve, WildCare, etc.

VIX. Financial Status

The Friends of China Camp financial report for FY 2012-2013 operations of China Camp State Park is attached.



This report has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Friends of China Camp. Submitted September 30, 2013

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