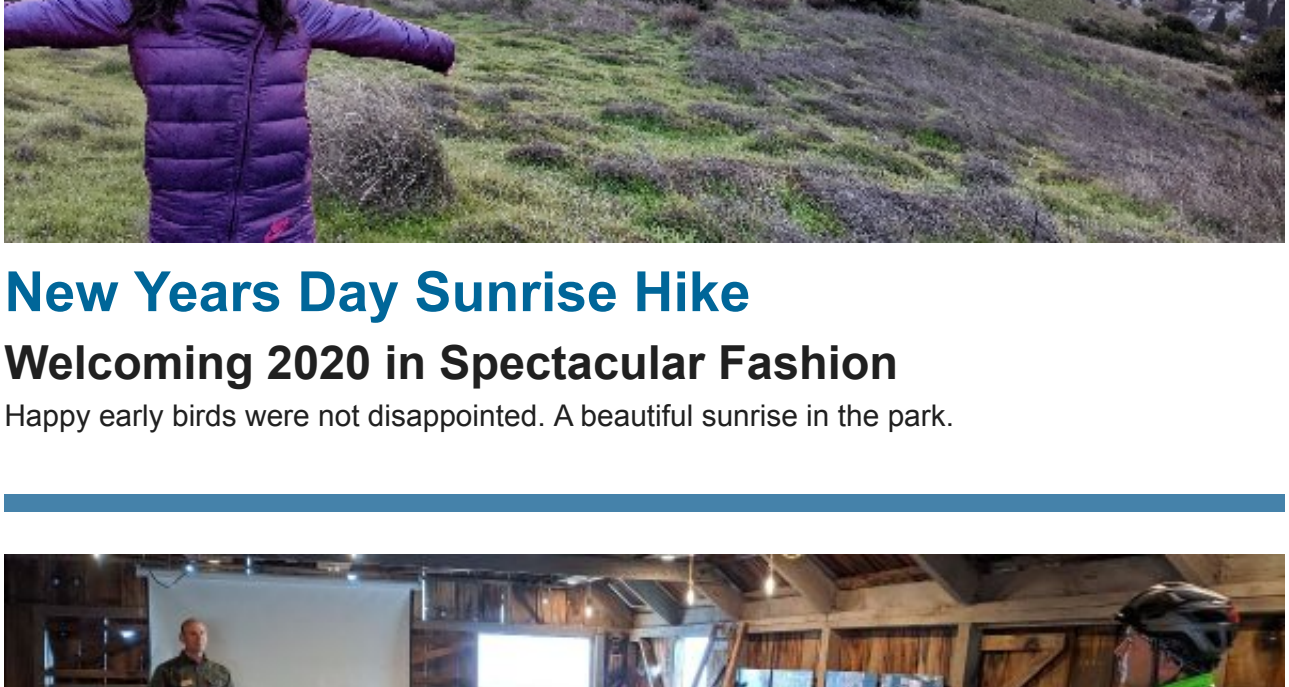


In this edition of the Friends of China Camp Newsletter:

New Years Day Hike | Annual Meeting | Nature in Winter | Book Club | Kubota Donation | Volunteer, Helen Sitchler | Extending our Reach | Smoking in the Park | Oysters | Park IQ | Upcoming Events | How You Can Help

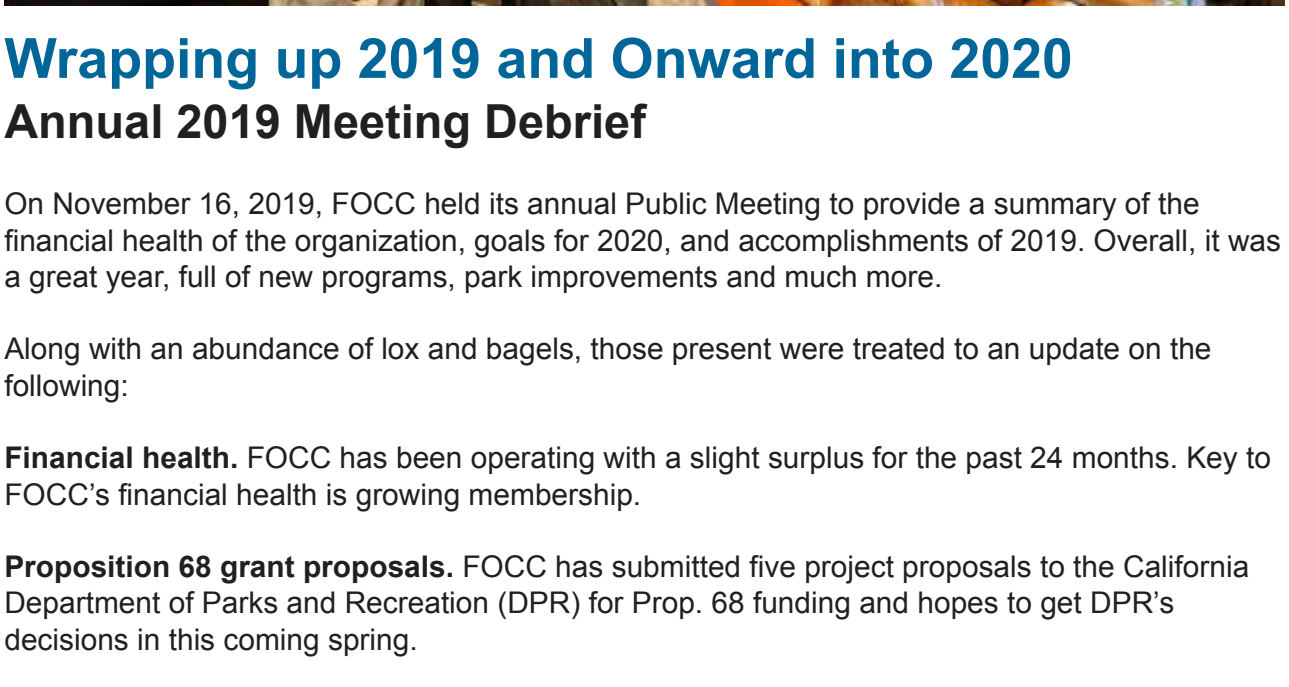
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New Years Day Sunrise Hike

Welcoming 2020 in Spectacular Fashion

Happy early birds were not disappointed. A beautiful sunrise in the park.



Wrapping up 2019 and Onward into 2020

Annual 2019 Meeting Debrief

On November 16, 2019, FOCC held its annual Public Meeting to provide a summary of the financial health of the organization, goals for 2020, and accomplishments of 2019. Overall, it was a great year, full of new programs, park improvements and much more.

Along with an abundance of lox and bagels, those present were treated to an update on the following:

Financial health. FOCC has been operating with a slight surplus for the past 24 months. Key to FOCC's financial health is growing membership.

Proposition 68 grant proposals. FOCC has submitted five project proposals to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) for Prop. 68 funding and hopes to get DPR's decisions in this coming spring.

Trail improvement progress. Volunteers continue to maintain and improve the trail network, and in 2020, FOCC hopes to complete trail upgrades around the campground, reaching 6 miles of upgraded trails out of 15.

Program growth and outreach. FOCC hosted a wide range of guided hikes, speakers, and other activities for all ages in 2019. In addition, FOCC advanced its outreach goals by providing transportation to 40 San Rafael residents from the Canal neighborhood to participate in Earth Day and a similar count of Chinese seniors on Heritage Day.

Fire safety improvements. To mitigate fire risk, FOCC remains vigilant about mowing grass and extinguishing unattended BBQs. San Rafael Fire Department assists FOCC with advice and services on a regular basis.

Thanks to the growing number of generous donors, FOCC now boasts a complete fleet of maintenance vehicles, and the 15,000 hours of volunteer time keeps "the park's doors open." A testament to China Camp's value and popularity in the community is the top honors it has received in 2017, 2018, and 2019 in the *Pacific Sun's* Best of Marin categories of **1) Best Bike Route/Trail**, and **2) Best Park/Open Space. Congratulations to FOCC!**



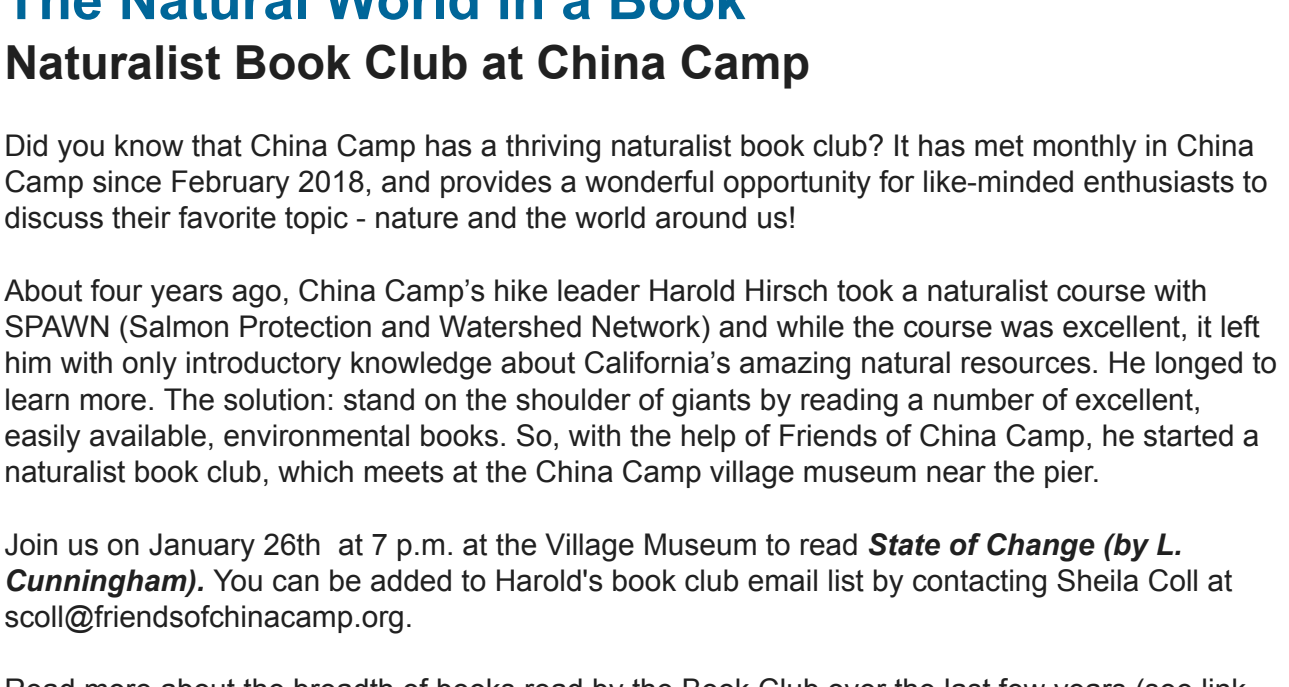
Hot Times for Cool Winter Finds

Head to China Camp to Discover Nature in Winter

Now is a great time to head to China Camp to discover what winter has to offer. Discover waterfalls, early wildflowers, and cool critters.

Drip, drop, splash: welcome rains have turned our bay-hugging park into a lush wonderland of wintertime gems. China Camp's creek beds now burble with cascades and waterfalls, ferns are unfurling and flowers beginning to bloom, and frog song fills the air. Read more about seasonal treasures and where to find them via the 'Learn More' link below.

[Learn More](#)



The Natural World in a Book

Naturalist Book Club at China Camp

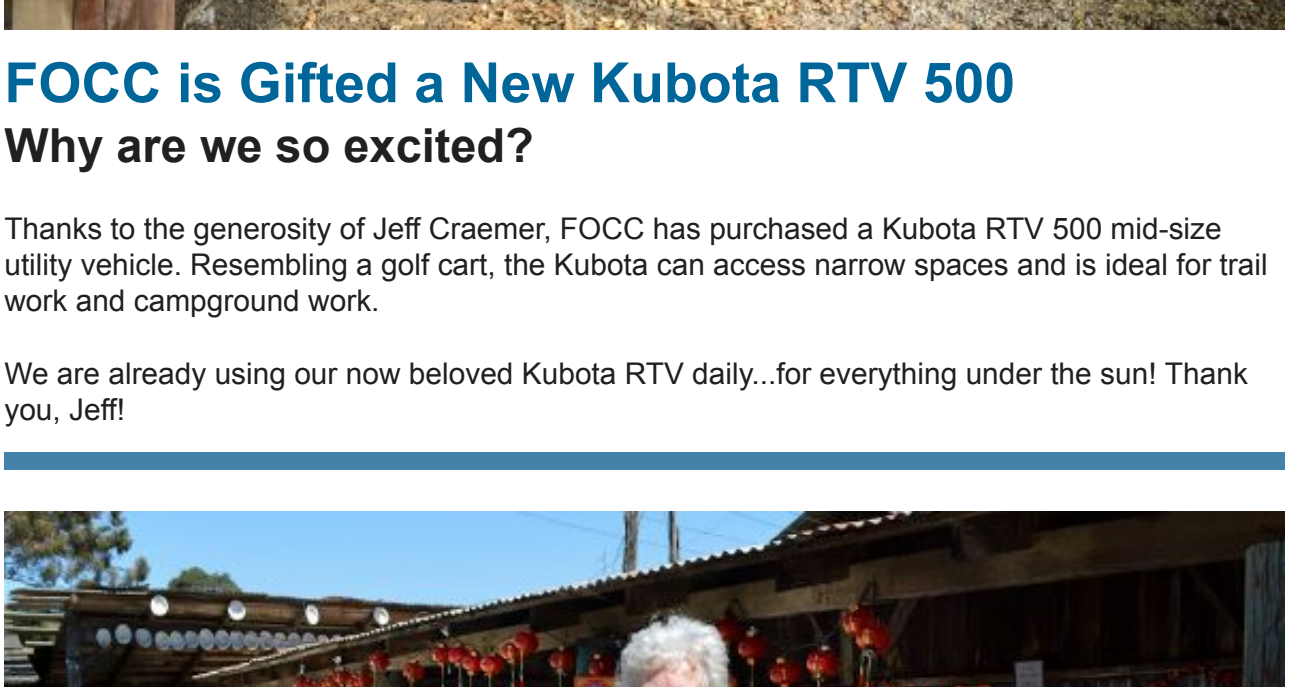
Did you know that China Camp has a thriving naturalist book club? It has met monthly in China Camp since February 2018, and provides a wonderful opportunity for like-minded enthusiasts to discuss their favorite topic - nature and the world around us!

About four years ago, China Camp's hike leader Harold Hirsch took a naturalist course with SPAWN (Salmon Protection and Watershed Network) and while the course was excellent, it left him with only introductory knowledge about California's amazing natural resources. He longed to learn more. The solution: stand on the shoulder of giants by reading a number of excellent, easily available, environmental books. So, with the help of Friends of China Camp, he started a naturalist book club, which meets at the China Camp village museum near the pier.

Join us on January 26th at 7 p.m. at the Village Museum to read *State of Change (by L. Cunningham)*. You can be added to Harold's book club email list by contacting Sheila Coll at scoll@friendsofchinacamp.org.

Read more about the breadth of books read by the Book Club over the last few years (see link below) and you may find some new books to add to your reading list!

[More on the Book Club](#)

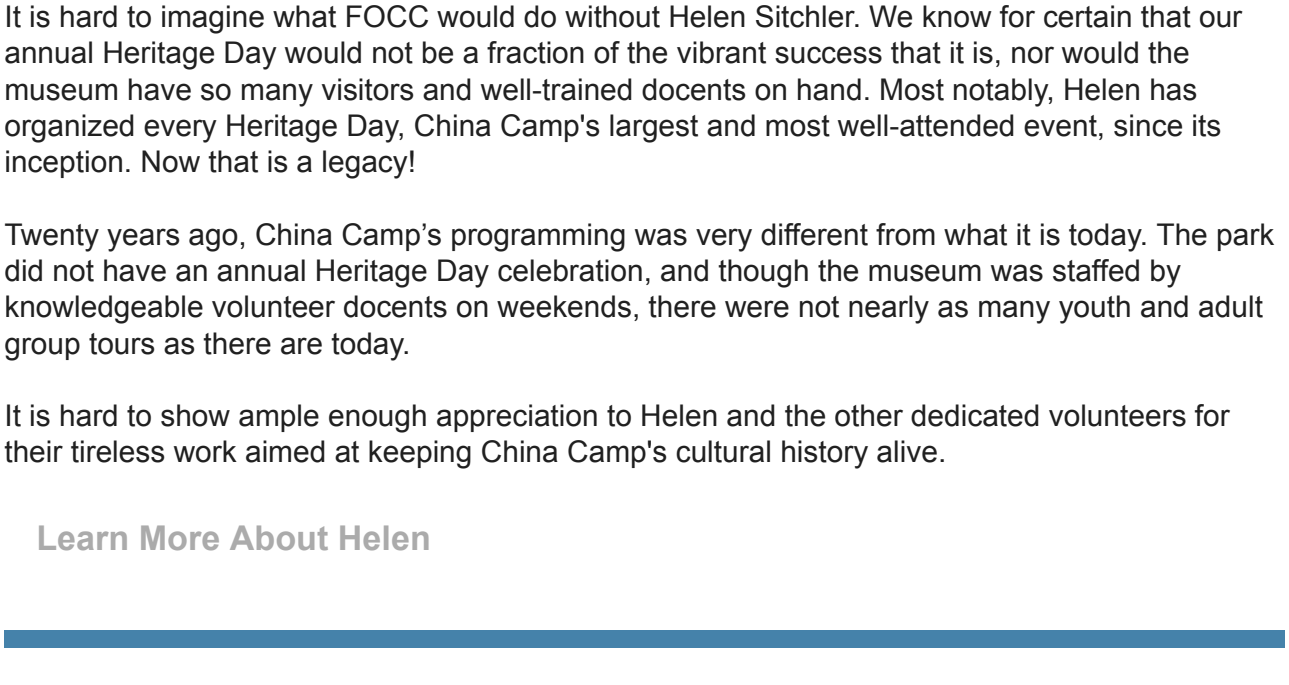


FOCC is Gifted a New Kubota RTV 500

Why are we so excited?

Thanks to the generosity of Jeff Craemer, FOCC has purchased a Kubota RTV 500 mid-size utility vehicle. Resembling a golf cart, the Kubota can access narrow spaces and is ideal for trail work and campground work.

We are already using our now beloved Kubota RTV daily...for everything under the sun! Thank you, Jeff!



Volunteer of the Quarter

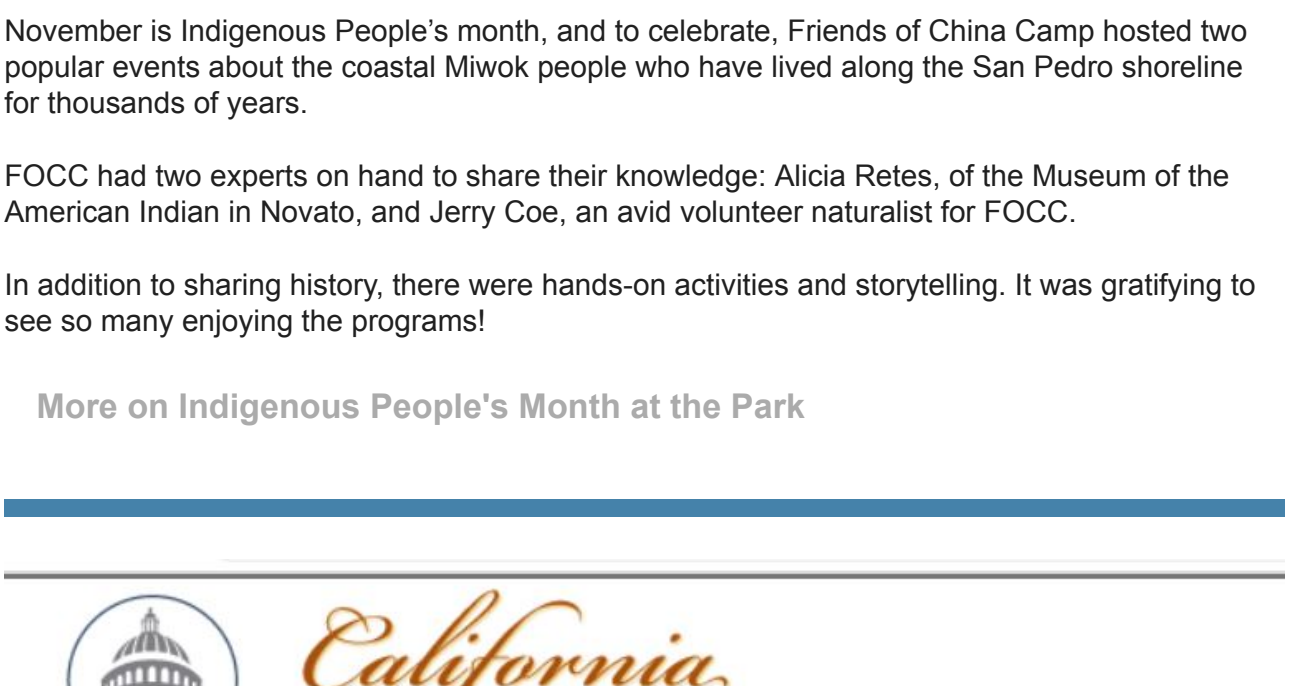
Helen Sitchler (on the left, with fellow volunteer, Yvonne Brown)

It is hard to imagine what FOCC would do without Helen Sitchler. We know for certain that our annual Heritage Day would not be a fraction of the vibrant success that it is, nor would the museum have so many visitors and well-trained docents on hand. Most notably, Helen has organized every Heritage Day, China Camp's largest and most well-attended event, since its inception. Now that is a legacy!

Twenty years ago, China Camp's programming was very different from what it is today. The park did not have an annual Heritage Day celebration, and though the museum was staffed by knowledgeable volunteer docents on weekends, there were not nearly as many youth and adult group tours as there are today.

It is hard to show ample enough appreciation to Helen and the other dedicated volunteers for their tireless work aimed at keeping China Camp's cultural history alive.

[Learn More About Helen](#)



Indigenous People's Month in the Park

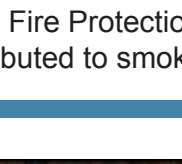
Miwok History at China Camp

November is Indigenous People's month, and to celebrate, Friends of China Camp hosted two popular events about the coastal Miwok people who have lived along the San Pedro shoreline for thousands of years.

FOCC had two experts on hand to share their knowledge: Alicia Retes, of the Museum of the American Indian in Novato, and Jerry Coe, an avid volunteer naturalist for FOCC.

In addition to sharing history, there were hands-on activities and storytelling. It was gratifying to see so many enjoying the programs!

[More on Indigenous People's Month at the Park](#)



California LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION

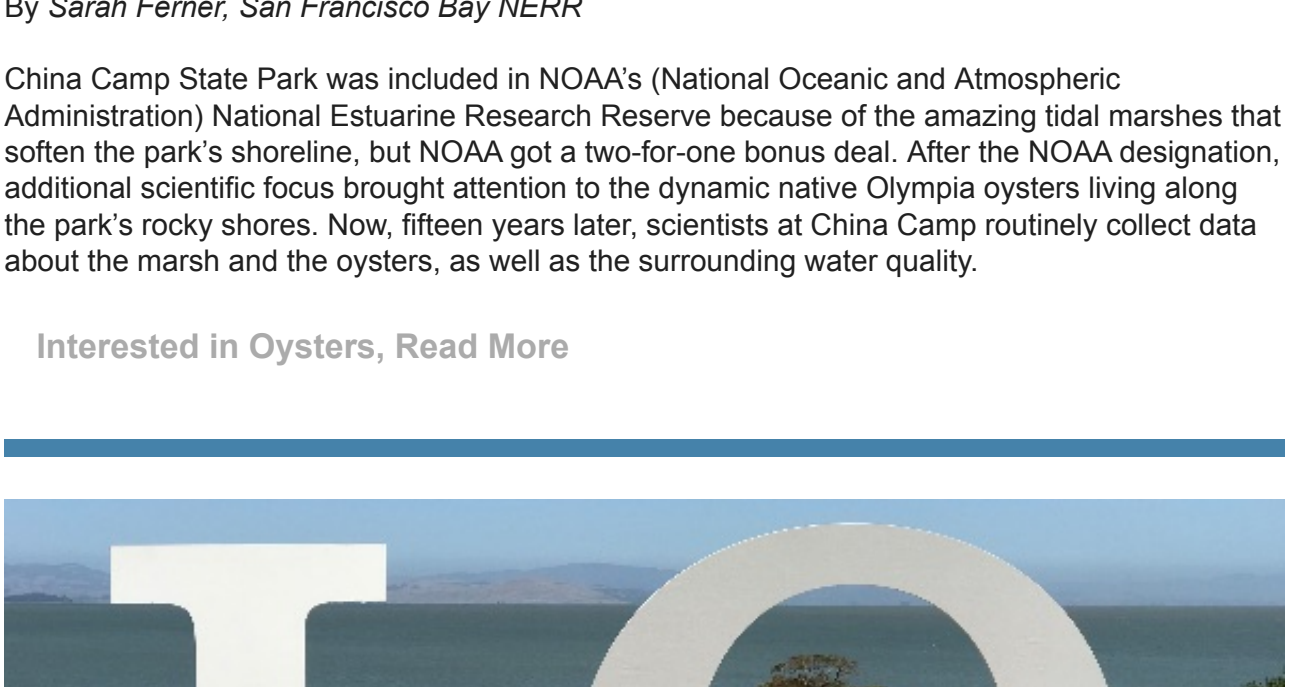
New Law:

No Smoking at State Parks and Beaches

Lighting Up is No Longer Allowed in the Park

In October 2019, Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill 8 -- a bill **prohibiting smoking or vaping** (tobacco, marijuana and electronic cigarettes) **at state parks and beaches**, including those operated by entities who have entered into an agreement with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, such as Friends of China Camp. The law also prohibits disposal of cigarette or cigar waste unless in an appropriate waste receptacle. **The law allows smoking in parking lots and on paved roads.**

Violators may be fined up to \$25. **The ban goes into effect January 2020** but can be enforced only once "No Smoking" signs are installed. The bill's sponsors hope that the new law will enhance fire safety as well as public health. According to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, for the past five years, 44 of California's wildfires annually have been attributed to smoking.



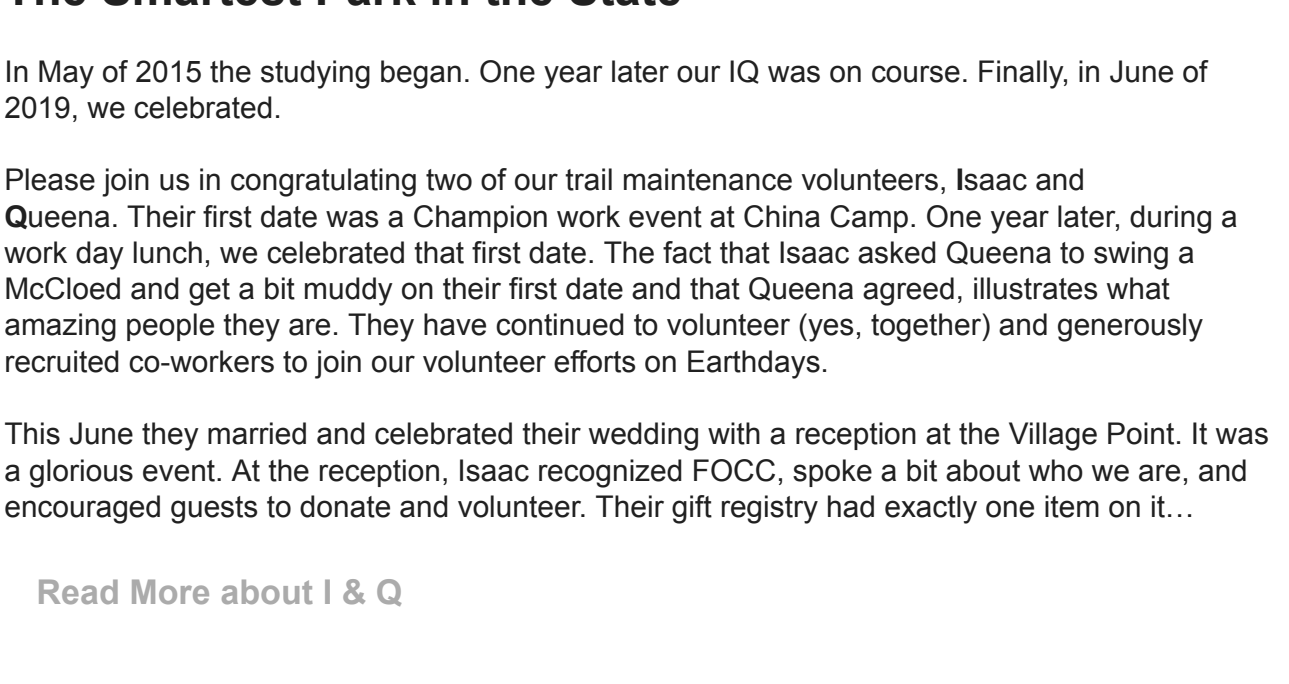
Oysters in China Camp

Tracking Changes in Native Oyster Populations

By Sarah Ferner, San Francisco Bay NERR

China Camp State Park was included in NOAA's (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) National Estuarine Research Reserve because of the amazing tidal marshes that soften the park's shoreline, but NOAA got a two-for-one bonus deal. After the NOAA designation, additional scientific focus brought attention to the dynamic native Olympia oysters living along the park's rocky shores. Now, fifteen years later, scientists at China Camp routinely collect data about the marsh and the oysters, as well as the surrounding water quality.

[Interested in Oysters, Read More](#)



China Camp's High IQ

The Smartest Park in the State

In May of 2015 the studying began. One year later our IQ was on course. Finally, in June of 2019, we celebrated.

Please join us in congratulating two of our trail maintenance volunteers, Isaac and Queena. Their first date was a Champion work event at China Camp. One year later, during a work day lunch, we celebrated that first date. The fact that Isaac asked Queena to swing a McCreed and get a bit muddy on their first date and that Queena agreed, illustrates what amazing people they are. They have continued to volunteer (yes, together) and generously recruited co-workers to join our volunteer efforts on Earthdays.

This June they married and celebrated their wedding with a reception at the Village Point. It was a glorious event. At the reception, Isaac recognized FOCC, spoke a bit about who we are, and encouraged guests to donate and volunteer. Their gift registry had exactly one item on it...

[Read More about I & Q](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Full Moon Hike
January 10th, 4:15 pm - 7:00 pm

Junior Ranger Program
January 11th, 10:00 am - Noon

King Tide Hikes
January 12th, 12:30 pm
February 9th, 11:30 am

Naturalist Book Group
January 26th, 7:00 pm

Naturalist Walks
January 18th, 8:00 am - 10:00 am
January 19th, 12:30 pm - 2:30 pm

[SEE ALL UPCOMING EVENTS](#)



HOW YOU CAN HELP

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