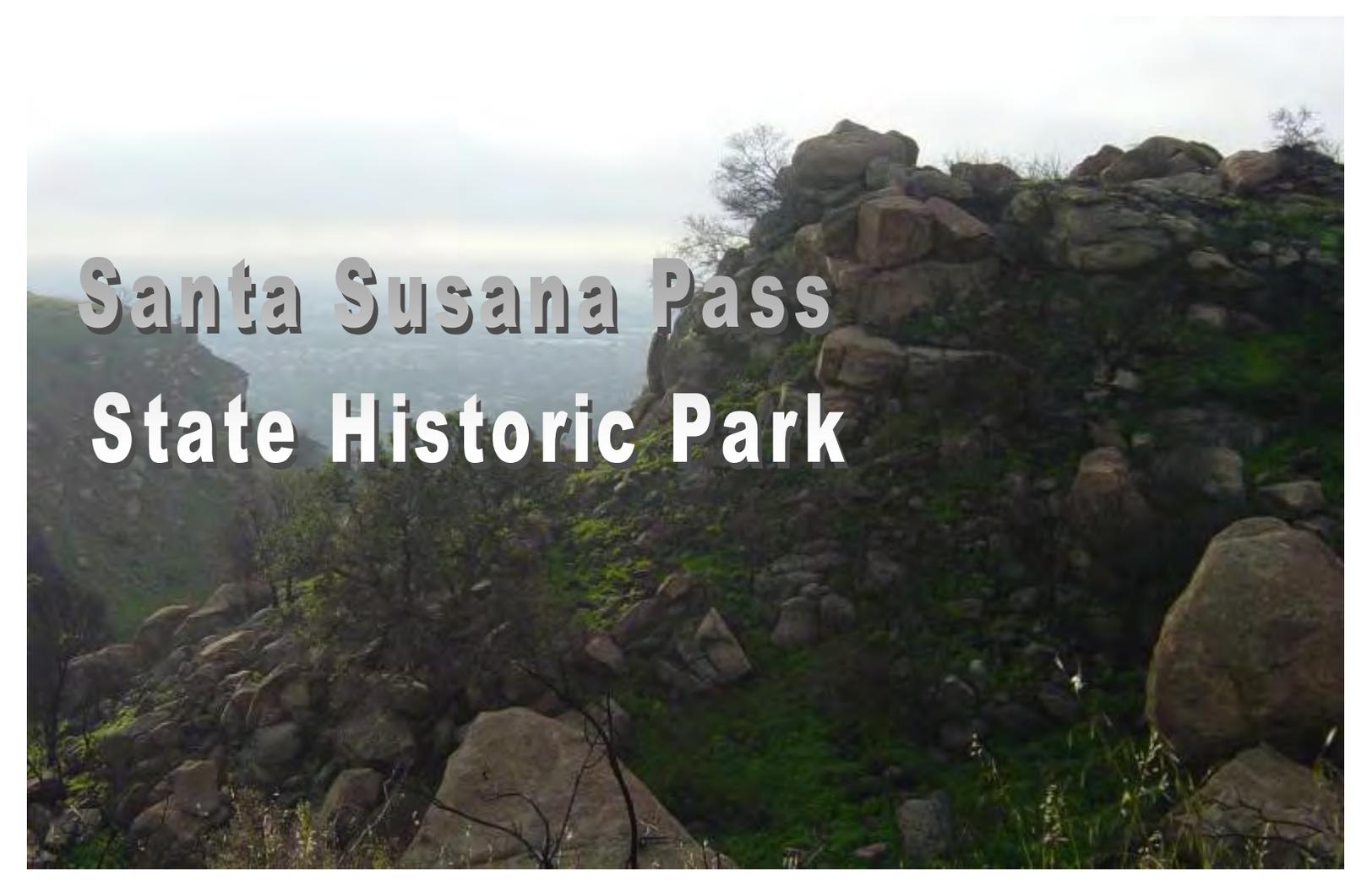


INVENTORY OF VISITOR-USE RESOURCES

- AESTHETICS
- RECREATION
- INTERPRETATION
- EDUCATION



Santa Susana Pass
State Historic Park

SANTA SUSANA STATE HISTORIC PARK

INVENTORY OF VISITOR-USE RESOURCES

**By
Karen Bartelt Adams
Associate Landscape Architect**



**Southern Service Center
Department of Parks and Recreation
State of California**

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Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park

INVENTORY OF VISITOR-USE RESOURCES

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Introduction

Scope and Setting

This inventory briefly addresses the visitor-use resources associated with Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. These resources include aesthetics, recreation, interpretation, and education—resources relative to how people perceive, relate to, or use the park. The inventory primarily looks at current conditions, but also considers some past and potential future activities and facilities. The park is relatively new to the state park system, so it is important to understand the resources that are inherent and unique to this place. To further this understanding, the inventory also considers the regional context of the Santa Susana Mountains, the Simi Hills, the Santa Monica Mountains, and the Los Angeles/San Fernando Valley greater metropolitan area.

Significant local and regional changes have taken place over the last century, and the last few decades have intensified them, bringing about major shifts in land use patterns, population densities, and demographics. A large portion of the state's population now resides in the Los Angeles/San Fernando Valley greater metropolitan area—some 15.6 million people live, work, and recreate within this vast, intensely urban network. It is a regional area of unprecedented cultural diversity.

Santa Susanna Pass State Historic Park is situated on 670 acres of rugged terrain where the Simi Hills join the Santa Susana Mountains. The unit is located along the western boundary of Los Angeles County and immediately adjacent to Ventura County. The historic Santa Susana Pass corridor negotiated a section of this steep, rocky landscape, connecting the San Fernando and Simi Valleys. For visitors passing through today, the park offers the same panoramic views of the vast San Fernando Valley floor. Now, however, the rustic hills create a sharp, dramatic shoreline against the sea of development that fills the valley. Just to the north of the park, the current Santa Susana Pass Road and State Route 118 (Ronald Reagan Freeway) provide travelers their critical connection between the two valleys.

Initial land holdings were acquired in 1979. The park unit was named and classified in 1998.

Attendance and User Patterns¹

Accurate historic information on park visitation—who, how many, and patterns of use—is not available. Annual visitation is estimated to range between 30,000 and 40,000. Rough estimates indicate that visitation rates at Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park have increased 25% in the last four years, except for 2002/2003 (which likely reflects the January 2002 system-wide fee increase). Los Angeles County, currently with 28% of California's population, is projected to increase a total of 19% between 2000 and 2050. Ventura County is projected to increase 42% over the same period.

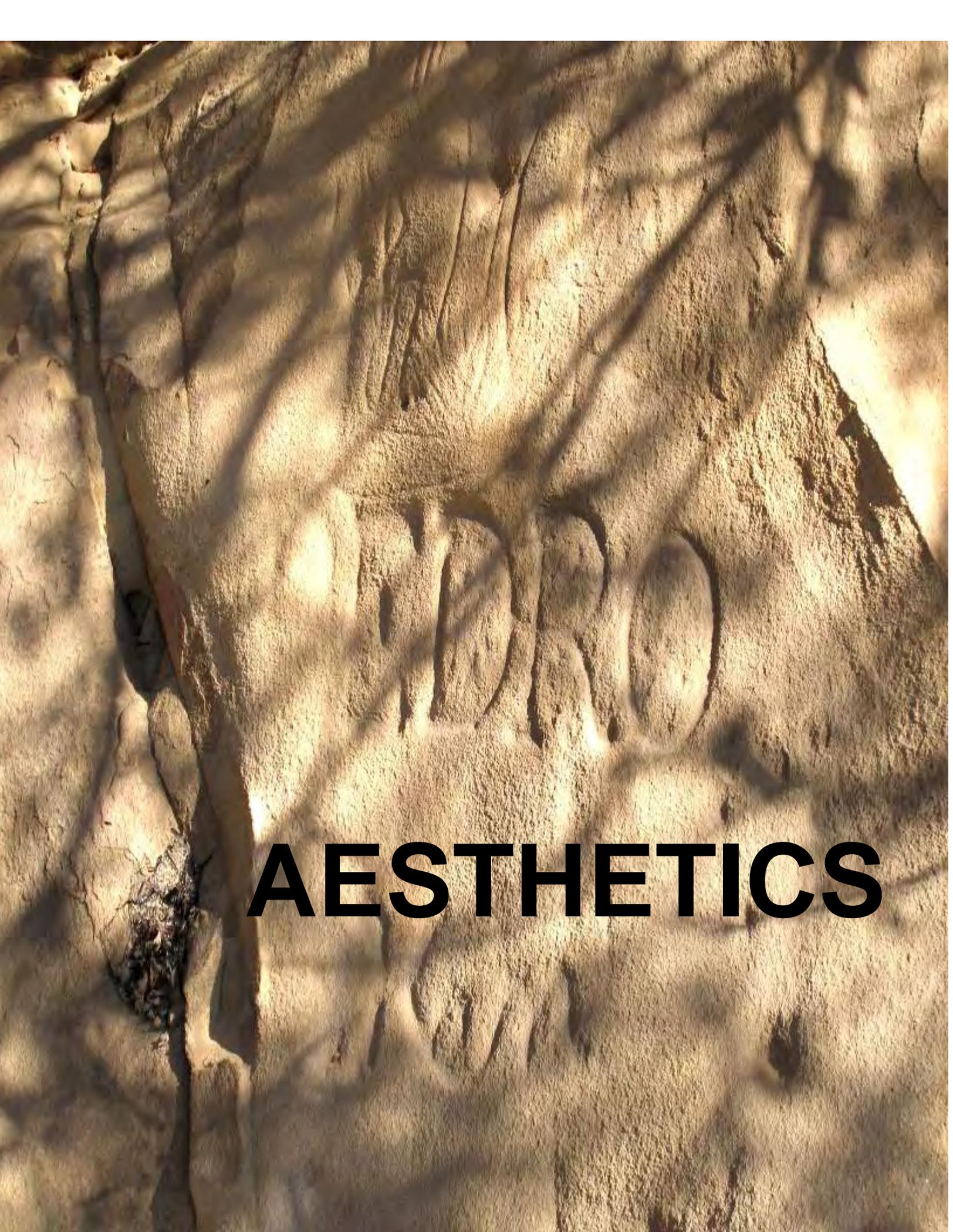
Park visitation is affected by seasonal temperatures as the average monthly highs reach the upper 80s and 90s from June through September and there is little shade cover. Most park visitors during these months recreate during the early morning hours when the temperatures can be 30 degrees cooler on average.

Little is known about historic recreational uses of Santa Susana Pass SHP. There are general references to trail use for hikers, bikers, and horse riders, and a recent history (from 2002) of using the park for geocaching. Santa Susana Pass Road is used as a recreational bike route, as well as a recreational motorcycle route. Nearby Stoney Point is a popular rock climbing area. Park staff report that the majority of park users come from within 10 miles of the park, range widely in age, are mainly hikers and access the park from Chatsworth Park-South. Many visitors come from the surrounding cities of Simi Valley, Chatsworth, Canoga Park, West Hills and Woodland Hills. Nearby residents often walk their dogs on the park's trails, although it is not permitted.

There are no developed facilities within the park, no parking, camping, picnic or posted and maintained trail facilities, and the park is open for day-use visitors only. Most park visitors use street parking or the lots in Chatsworth Park-South. There is no overnight use of the park-- however, there is some "unofficial" after-hours use. The park has several spots favored by young groups of partiers.

With the exception of a few interpretive panels at one of the Chatsworth-South trailheads, no State Park interpretive or educational programs have been developed for the park. Organized hikes by local trail groups are probably the only ongoing interpretive activity. Some historic and other cultural information relative to the park and surroundings is made available by the Chatsworth Historical Society located on The Homestead Acre within the Chatsworth Park South.

¹ Information in this section was taken, in part, from Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park General Plan Recreation Component (Appendix __).



AESTHETICS



Landscape Character

The landscape of Santa Susana State Historic Park is defined by the complex topography, massive boulders, and weathered rock outcrops of the Chatsworth Formation. The presence of rock dominates the park and its surroundings. It delineates ridgelines, defines distinctive peaks, masses into great formations, and tumbles down the broad backs of mountains. Rocky outcrops frame dramatic viewsheds, create precipices and promontories, and erupt in unlikely places like grasslands meadows and residential backyards.

It is a steep, rugged landscape, created of materials deposited in deep marine canyons during the Cretaceous Period, some 70 million years ago. Immense geologic forces formed and heaved these deposits into the sun-bleached and wind-washed mountains before us today. Rocky ridgelines rise in great earthen tiers easterly toward Ventura County and trend generally along a southwest/northeast diagonal. Water finds its way to every draw, fold, and crevice, and several well-defined drainages are carved into the terrain, descending in an easterly run to the lowlands of the San Fernando Valley. Within the park, elevations change at least 850 feet with the high point of 1850 ft. at Peak “D.”¹ Chatsworth and Rocky Peaks (both in excess of 2,000 feet) rise nearby.

A network of trails negotiates much of the park, offering first-hand experiences of the park’s ever-changing topography. Visitor’s ascend and descend the steep terrain as it turns this way and that, sequentially opening to yet another orientation or elevational perspective—obscuring, then suddenly revealing dramatic views to landmark peaks or distant, broad valleys. Perhaps it’s the persistent challenge of way-finding that is so intriguing about this place. Perhaps it is the mountains’ patient yielding of its mysteries—the intricate layers of life forms nested into its rocky nooks and crannies, the silent presence of those who came before us, or its geological sense of the “long” time beyond human history altogether.

Those who hike the park regularly are familiar with its inexhaustible potential for new discoveries and remark that it takes many years to know such a place well. Others know this landscape merely as part of the scenic backdrop to the San Fernando Valley floor, the community of Chatsworth, or from the frames of old movies. For many it is a familiar presence in their daily comings-and-goings. For millions of freeway travelers it forms one flank of the modern Santa Susana Pass, where for a few minutes it offers another portal—a rare opportunity to experience the scale and flavor of the old west.

Over the centuries this mountainous landscape offered a formidable challenge to those wishing to travel valley to valley and to points beyond. The 21st Century finds it well-marked with tunnels, trestles, foot trails, and various roadbeds—reading well as a visual reference guide to the area’s transportation history. There is a long human record notched into the rocky landscape, evident not only in the weathered mortars and cupules, niche shelters and stone hearths, but also in quarry tailings, road cribbing, and the graffiti’d scratchings left on favored boulders. Old homestead sites hide in the hills, along with an abandoned reservoir or two. Here and there the hulk of an old car or truck can be seen rusting away in a steep ravine, tangled in the mountain’s shrubby growth and the mystery of how it got there. The long arms of utilities reach up across the park’s open space with power lines stretching overhead and pipe lines buried below.

All of this and more—the mountain absorbs these things well. It is just so much bigger, and older, and longer lasting. Looking up at these hills and mountains or walking the paths worn into

Aesthetics

its sides, each person takes in whatever sustaining qualities are needed at that time. Some eagerly search out the spring's treasure of wildflowers and note the subtle shifts from green to gold as days lengthen and heat up. Some note the footprints of the mountain lion, the coyote, the bobcat. Others push their muscle strength against the mountains' or draw on its rugged self reliance. To many, the mountains in their quiet, timeless way shield and protect the valley and offer sanctuary from the relentless pressures of urban living. Again and again visitors seek the special portals and elevated views of favored vantage points. There they gain solace, inspiration, or right-perspective and measure their days against the passage of time.

And, of course, some folks just want to walk their dogs.

¹ See Appendix ___ for map and photos of the park's significant peaks and ridgelines.



Access, Orientation, and Vantage Points

Santa Susana State Historic Park is a relatively new state park. Although its boundaries were drawn across a natural landscape that is steep and rugged, the park's borders are more strongly influenced by existing land uses, ownership parcel lines, and jurisdictional borders. These factors set up a number of issues related to the park's identity and the perceptions, access, and orientation of its visitors.

The park lacks a well-defined entrance and arrival point. It relies entirely on a scatter of poorly-mark trail entrances, each unique in character, but laden with constraints. Four of them enter indirectly from other parks or properties (at least one enters from private open space property). Three others open directly to a public roadway with no transition gateway or off-street parking.

The "Old Stagecoach Road" section is probably the park's primary feature, but trail confusion makes it difficult to locate for many visitors. Trails are the only way to move around within the park, and a casual, complex trail network has developed over the years. Many regular users limit their visits to favored routes, and a few local hikers know their way around the entire park, but many others rely on the meager descriptions of regional trail guides and lots of trial-and-error. Previous experience is quite helpful, because a park map locating boundaries, entrances, and trail routes has not been available to assist visitors or park staff with way-finding.

The park's mountainous terrain offers a number of exceptional vantage or viewpoints. In addition to the expected appeals and pleasures of elevated views, these offer the best orientation to the lay of the land. Unfortunately, they are located in places that are accessed only by trails, so it takes some time and effort to reach them. They are generally found by happenstance, previous experience, or shared information.

Access points, primary travel corridors, and vantage points are mapped on Exhibit ____.



Aesthetics

Regional Access and Transportation

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park has good regional geographic location. It is situated in easy proximity to a transportation grid of freeways, highways, major arterials and secondary streets. It is connected, on the San Fernando Valley side to a Citywide Bikeways System (City of Los Angeles: Valley Geographic Area) [LAB]. Note that City of Los Angeles jurisdiction includes the communities of the San Fernando Valley and includes this area in the Transportation Element of its general plan [LAGPTE]. The following regional information is relative to the park in terms of aesthetics and recreation and should be considered in future park planning.¹

Interstate 118 (Ronald Reagan Freeway)

Currently the park can be approached from both the Simi and San Fernando Valleys (east and west) via Interstate 118 (Ronald Reagan Freeway). It has scenic highway designations in several categories (state, county, or city levels). Prior to the freeway, Old State Route 118 ran along Los Angeles Avenue, Santa Susanna Pass Road and Devonshire Blvd.

Santa Susana Pass Road

This road runs along the park's northern border. It is a Designated Scenic Highway according to the LAGPTE. Although it is not included as a designated route in the citywide bicycle plan for the Valley Geographic Area, it is commonly used as a bike route for recreation and fitness riders.

Devonshire Street

Devonshire Street enters Chatsworth Park South. It is classified as a "Major Class II Highway" with "Future Transit Priority" according to the LAGPTE, and includes a "Funded or Existing Rail Station" within a few blocks of the park (east of Topanga Cyn. Blvd). Devonshire is currently classified as a Class II Bikeway (bike lane). The area between Topanga Cyn. Blvd. and De Soto Ave. is considered as a "Center/District with potential pedestrian priority street segments." It will be connected to a Metrolink line and a Class I Bikeway (bike path). According to *California Highways*, Devonshire Street began life in 1917 as Santa Susana Pass Road.

Topanga Canyon Boulevard

Highway 27 (Topanga Canyon Boulevard) runs north and south just a few blocks from the park's Chatsworth Park South entrance. It connects to Interstate 118 (as an on-ramp/exit) on the north and to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the 101 Freeway, and beach areas to the south. It is classified as a "Transit Priority" in the regional transportation plan [LAGPTE].

Other Routes

Regional access routes often relate to the area's geography. Valley floor roads are well developed, but the area surrounding the park also includes a complex of canyon roads. These create many scenic and interesting corridors and ultimately knit together many smaller, localized areas into a larger framework. A number of these routes exist around the park, including Black Canyon Road, Box Canyon Road, and Woolsey Canyon and Studio Roads. Several of the park entrances are accessed from secondary or local roadways (Lilac Lane, Andora Avenue). Note that Plummer Street to the southeast of the park is classified as a Class I Bikeway (bike path).

¹Refer to Appendix ___ for maps from the City of Los Angeles General Plan Transportation Element [LAGPTE] that are relative to the park.

Current Park Access or Entrance Points

The park access points included below are named and numbered for convenience of discussion. The list may not be complete, but it includes the primary entrances. The numbers have no significance and the names are not official. Statistics on who and how many use each access are not available at this time. It has been State Park policy to not allow access from private property unless it is open to use by the general public.

#1-Chatsworth Park South

Chatsworth Park South is a lovely community park established in 19___. It is owned and managed by the Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department and used primarily by the local community of Chatsworth. It functions as a main entry point for Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park, as well, offering a compliment of visitor-serving amenities and facilities. These include restrooms, parking, picnic areas, potable water, community-recreation center, and large lawn areas with shade trees.

Geographically, this community park is situated such that state park lands surround it on nearly all sides. It makes for a diffused entrance to the state park, however. There are actually several routes to take. They are not well defined, and they are somewhat lost among the activities and facilities of the local park. In many ways the state park functions as an extension of local park lands.

There is an interesting contrast in landscapes between the two parks. Chatsworth Park South lies sheltered, well watered, shaded, and green, a domesticated landscape surrounded by the rustic, natural hillsides of Santa Susana SHP, where the sun-burnished vegetation and boulders are freely exposed to the elements.

#2-Chatsworth Park North

Chatsworth Park North is a heavily used park that provides active recreation facilities to the local community. Ball fields have night lighting. The entrance into SSPSH from this park is not as well used as others. It is basically a connecting trail that negotiates some very steep terrain and crosses over a series of property and right-of way boundaries.

#3-Jeffrey Mark Court

This casual entrance to the park consists of two boundary fence openings to Powerhouse Road from Jeffrey Mark Court, a residential street that terminates in a corner of a PUD (planned unit development). Powerhouse Road itself enters off Larwin Avenue and is locked by the multiple agencies that maintain utilities within the park. The park entrances here are used primarily by local neighborhoods. Many retirees reside in this development, and a private security guard has been hired to serve their security needs. [Note: Conflicts frequently arise between the residents and young people who like to drink and party on the rocks just over the fence on State Park property.]

Aesthetics

#4-Andora Avenue

The Andora Avenue entrance to the park is sandwiched between the entrance road to Memorial Park Cemetery and the entrance to the long private driveway of the “Eagle’s Nest” residence. It is created by an offset opening between two chain-link fences and passes through a narrow, tree-lined corridor shared with an adjacent drainage channel. This entrance is in proximity to a low-density, single-family residential area zoned to keep horses (especially down Lassen Street).

#5-Lilac Lane

This west entrance to the park is from property managed by Rancho Simi Recreation...and known as the Stagecoach Trailhead. It is located off Lilac Lane with casual field parking for 5 or more cars. There is an opening in the fence running along the Ventura/LA county line that marks the actual entrance to the state park. This trailhead also includes a connector trail to Rocky Peak Park, as well as other trails within the state park. This entrance is an important access point for the state park, but because Lilac Lane is not that easy to find it is used mostly by those who know the area or are guided there by trail guides.

#6-Santa Susana Pass Road

This picturesque entrance point coincides with the historic roadway. Vehicular traffic has been blocked by boulders, but hikers can edge around the rocks. Off-road parking for a few cars is possible here.

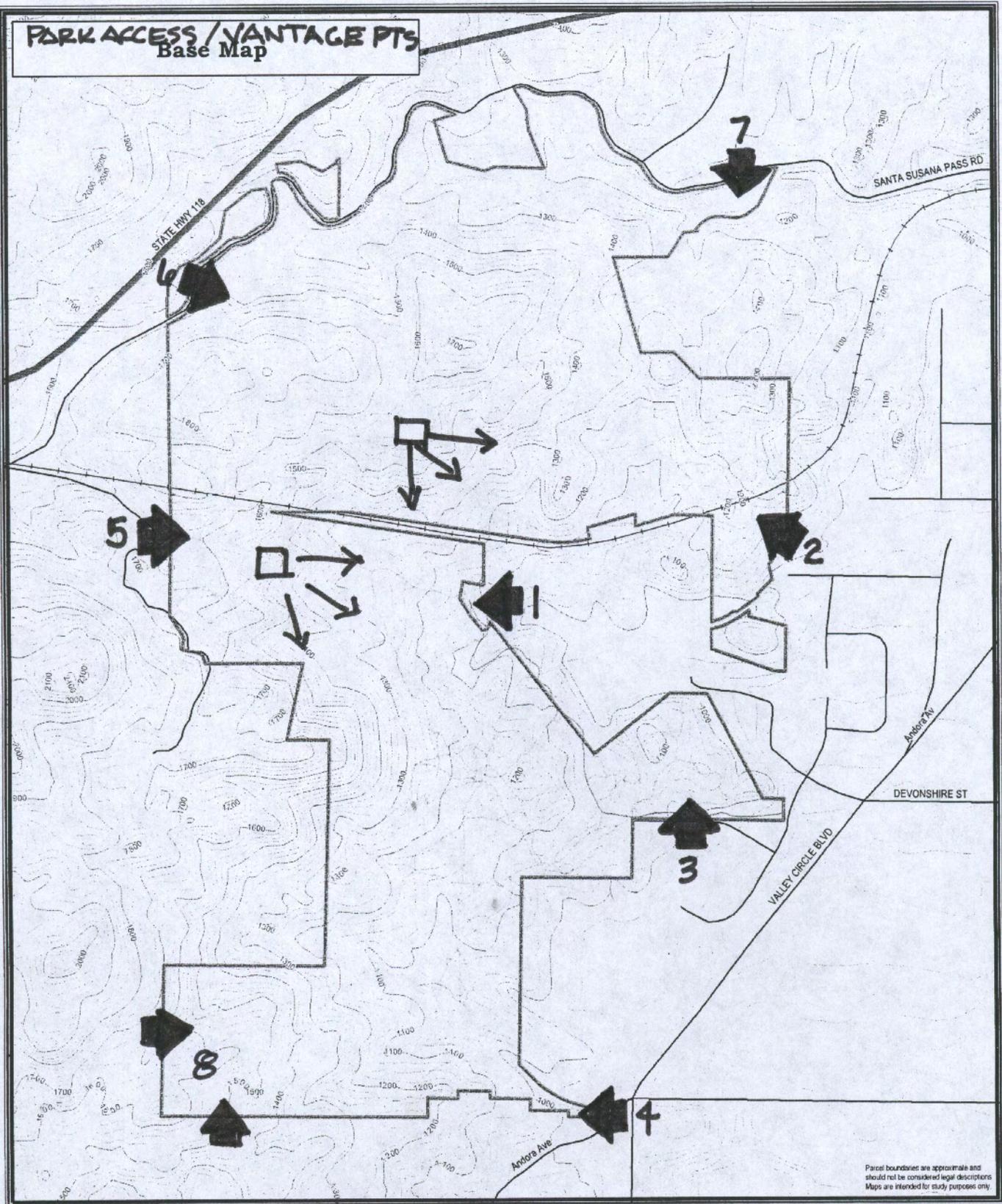
#7 -Spahn Ranch (potential)

Entrance to this historic area is now blocked off with chain and rocks and not currently accessible from Santa Susana Pass Road. It was obscured with vegetation until fire burned through in 2005. During its time as an equestrian operation, a large portion of this ranch was open to the road for vehicles to come and go as needed. Of all the entrance points, this one has the most unrealized potential for development within the boundaries of state park property.

#8-Miranda Trail and Other Southern Points

The Miranda Trail enters the park from a large tract of private open space just east of the southern-most region of the park. It is but one in a complex of trails that thread the hills and weave in and out of this generalized southern area. Chatsworth Oaks Park to the south of the state park (not adjacent), also serves as a trail head to this regional open space area. It is not known how many visitors enter the park from this direction, but it is assumed that some of the trail use in this area is equestrian. There are also trails entering from some of the residential cul-de-sacs south of park (Trigger, Dale, Andora) that are used by horse riders, mountain bike riders, and hikers--primarily local.

PARK ACCESS / VANTAGE PTS Base Map



Parcel boundaries are approximate and should not be considered legal descriptions. Maps are intended for study purposes only.

Legend

- Regional Roads**
- State Hwy
- Local Road
- Service Road
- - - Trail
- + + Railroad
- Park Boundary

- Contours**
- 100ft Interval
- - - 25ft Interval



Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park



Special Features and Landscapes

T#	Topographic Features
Ridgelines	
1.	D Ridge, including D3 "Saddle Horn" Peak

Primary Peaks	
2.	Peak "A"
3.	Peak "F" (White Rock)
4.	Peak "T"

Regional Peaks and Nearby Features	
5.	Chatsworth Peak
6.	Rocky Peak
7.	Stoney Point
8.	[Northern Water Tower]

Notable Rock Formations	
9a,b,c	"U" "G" "O2"
10.	Balancing Rock
11.	"F" White Rock

Riparian Corridor/ Drainage Courses	
12a,b,c	#1, #2, #3

13. Seasonal Waterfall

V#	Vegetation
1.	Chaparral Landscape

Grassland/ Meadows:	
2a,b,c	#1, #2, #3

3. Live Oak Stands

4a,b Lone Tree on Top of Peak: "H" and "11"

5a,b,c Olive Tree Lines: #1, #2, #3

6. Eucalyptus Grove

7. Eucalyptus and Pond Reservoir

8. Riparian Corridor Landscapes

9. Coastal Sage Scrub

10. Seasonal Wildflowers--varies

C#	Cultural Features
Old Stagecoach Road	
1.	Trail Bed
2.	Devil' s Slide
3.	Plaque

El Camino Nuevo	
4.	Road
5.	Cribbing (Not indicated on Map)

Utility Lines	
6.	Line Run A
7.	Line Run B

Railroad Corridor	
8.	Tracks/Grade Bank
9.	Tunnels

Rock Quarry Tailings & Pits	
10.	Area #1

11.	Powerhouse
12.	Powerhouse Road

13. Fill Scar

Tank Reservoirs	
14a,b	#1, #2

Wrecked Cars—various scattered
Not Indicated on Map

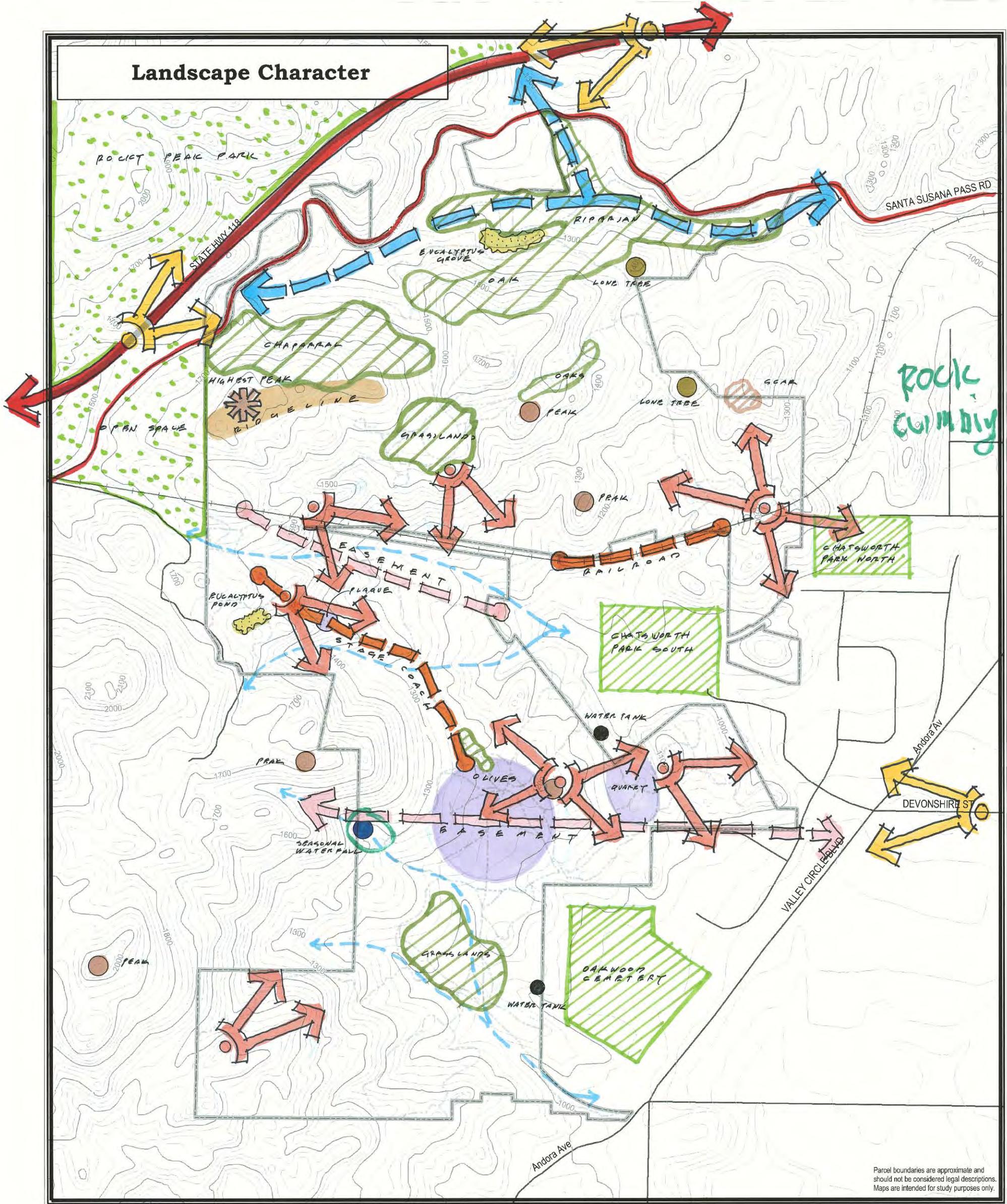
Access, Corridors & Vantage Points

Special Vantage Points
#1,2,3,4,5

Current Access or Entrance Points
#1-Chatsworth Park South
#2-Chatsworth Park North
#3-Jeffrey Mark Court
#4-Andora Road
#5-Lilac Lane
#6-Santa Susana Pass Road
#7-Miranda Trail
#8-Spahn Ranch (potential)

Note: Access, Corridors, and Vantage Points are also mapped on Exhibit _____, Page _

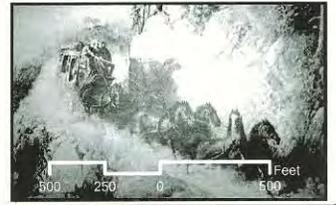
Landscape Character



Parcel boundaries are approximate and should not be considered legal descriptions. Maps are intended for study purposes only.

- Legend**
- Regional Roads**
 - State Hwy
 - Local Road
 - Service Road
 - Trail
 - Railroad
 - Park Boundary
 - Contours**
 - 100ft Interval
 - 25ft Interval

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park



Summary, Assessment, and Recommendations

The aesthetic values of park land include its scenic qualities, notable landscape features, and character or “spirit of place.” Aesthetic resources, as discussed here, are essentially cultural values that become associated with a given place. They reflect both the human experience and inherent characteristics of the place itself. For long range planning purposes it is important to identify these values so that they can be understood, appreciated, protected, and made accessible for future park visitors.

The landscape character of Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park was described in a previous section, where it was noted that the park’s landscape was characterized by a steep, complex topography, weathered rock outcrops, and the imprints of a long cultural history. Massive boulders define much of the land’s rugged form and texture. Park boundaries were drawn across this natural landscape, but they are more strongly influenced by existing land uses, ownership parcel lines, and jurisdictions. These factors set up a number of issues related to the park’s identity and the perceptions, access, and orientation of its visitors.

Special features and landscapes were mapped and classified under the following categories: topographic features; vegetation; cultural features; access, corridors and vantage points. *Topographic Features* include primary peaks and ridgelines, regional peaks and nearby features, notable rock formations, riparian corridor/drainage courses, and a seasonal waterfall. *Vegetation* includes chaparral, grasslands or meadows, live oak stands, distinctive individual trees, historic olive tree-lines, eucalyptus groves, and coastal sage scrub habitat. *Cultural Features* include the Old Stagecoach Road and features related to it, El Camino Nuevo, utility runs, the railroad corridor and its tunnels, rock quarry features (tailings, pits, and grading scars), utility roads, tanks, reservoirs, and vehicle carcasses. *Access Points, Primary Travel Corridors, and Vantage Points* were also mapped.

The aesthetic experience is strongly connected to our senses and perceptions, our need to recognize pattern, negotiate space, and to understand and order our experience in the environment. This said, the park offers visitors significant challenges and opportunities.

Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park has good regional geographic location. It is situated in easy proximity to a transportation grid of freeways, highways, major arterials and secondary streets. In recognition of their extraordinary scenic values, both Interstate 118 (Ronald Reagan Freeway) and Santa Susana Pass Road have scenic highway designations through this area.

The park lacks a well-defined entrance and arrival point, however. It relies entirely on a scatter of poorly-mark trail entrances, each unique in character, but laden with constraints. Four of them enter indirectly from other parks or properties (at least one enters from private open space property). Three others open directly to a public roadway with no transition gateway or off-street parking. The park’s complicated topography is further complicated by its casual web of unmarked trails and old roadbeds, so there is high potential for confusion in way-finding. Trails are the only real means of entering or traveling through the park.

The park’s mountainous terrain offers a number of exceptional vantage or viewpoints. In addition to the expected appeals and pleasures of elevated views, these offer the best orientation to the lay of the land. Unfortunately, they are located in places that are accessed only by trails, so it takes some time and effort to reach them. They are generally found by happenstance, previous experience, or shared information.











Recreation