models for saving sonoma county state parks

CALPA conference

April 24, 2014

the parks alliance
for sonoma county

- Formed June 2011 in response to park closure list

- Started by Sonoma Land Trust, Sonoma County Regional Parks, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

- 20-25 organizational members

the parks alliance
for sonoma county

Functions
- Convener of all interested stakeholders
- Liaison from Sonoma County to other organizations
  - DPR, CSPF, stakeholders in other counties
- Central org for communications, fundraising, messaging and advocacy
- Research, data collection, information gathering
- Support for park operators/donors

Current partnerships

- Austin Creek
  - Operating agreement – 1 nonprofit and DPR
- Jack London
  - Operating agreement – 1 nonprofit and DPR
- Sugarloaf Ridge
  - Operating agreement – 5 nonprofits and DPR
- Petaluma Adobe
  - Donor agreement

Austin Creek State Recreation Area

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods & Russian River District State Parks
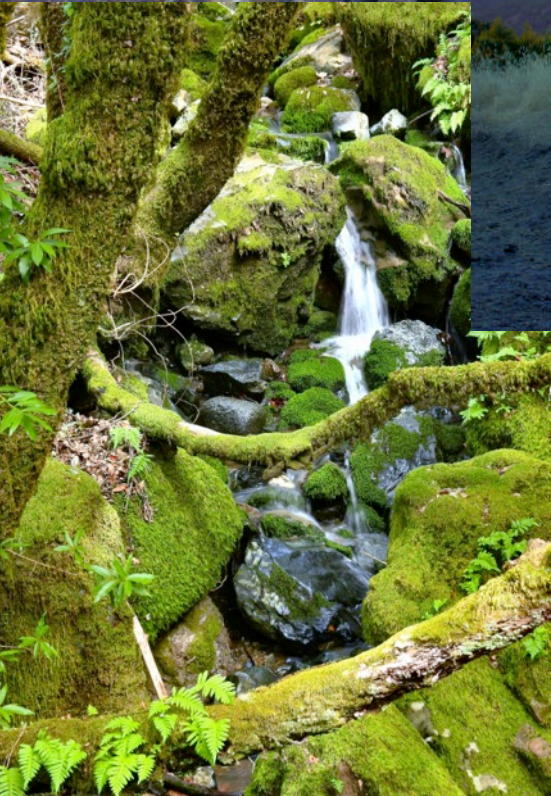
Stewards

- Fee Collection/Kiosk Operation for Austin Creek & Armstrong Redwoods
- Campground Operation & Maintenance
- Interpretive Programming & Special Events
- Cultural Resource Projects
- VIP Recruitment, Training & Coordination
- Funding for tree hazard survey
- Assistance with Armstrong Redwoods Visitor Services Operations

State Parks

- Natural Resource Management
- Cultural Resource Management
- Water & Sewage System Maintenance
- Provision of State Equipment, when feasible
- Consultation on Facility Issues
- Annual Tree Hazard Survey
- VIP Support – liability, worker's comp, State vehicle usage
- Trail project w/ 1478 funds

Austin Creek State Recreation Area

Our shared matrix for success

- Shared vision and goals
- Staying mission-oriented
- Strong, long-standing partnership and proven track record of Stewards embracing other Partnerships

How we measure success

- Revenue & Visitation
- Visitor Feedback & Services Offered
- Operator's Bottom Line
- State Parks' Bottom Line
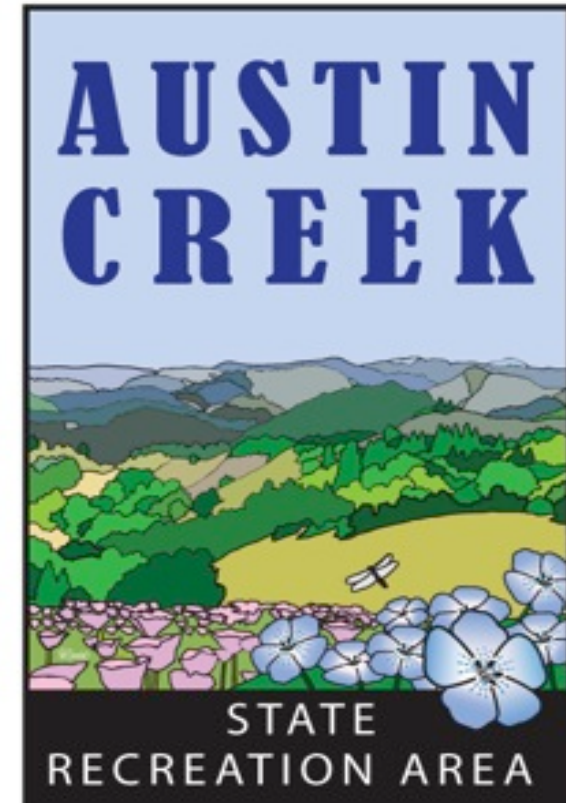
Austin Creek State Recreation Area

Challenges

- Navigating bureaucracy, uncharted territory
- Stewards expanding, State Parks shrinking
- New/changing responsibilities
- Re-organization within State Parks
- Timelines
- Increased insurance costs for Operator
- Two parks, one entrance

Planning for the future

- Communication
- Striking a balance between revenue generation necessities and resource protection
- Addressing sustainability – deferred maintenance, fundraising for operations
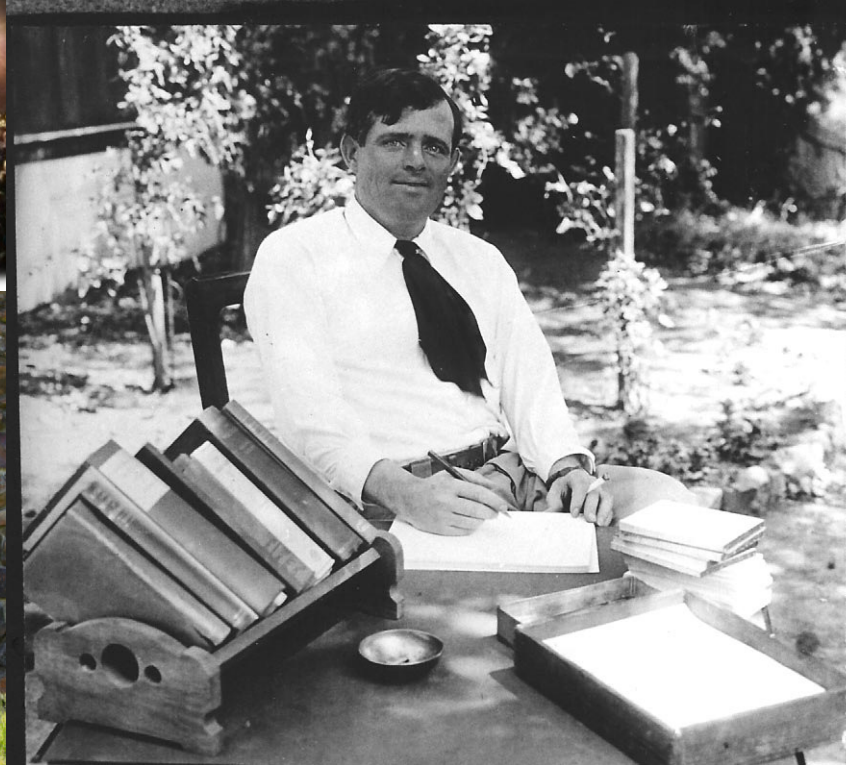
Jack London

Valley of the Moon Natural History Association & State Parks Diablo Vista District

VMNHA

- All revenue generation to support park operations
- Volunteer management to carry out essential functions of park
- Ongoing maintenance of grounds
- Year round interpretive programs
- Maintenance of trails
- Operational services – maintenance of restrooms, garbage, security, administration

State Parks

- Water service treatment/testing
- Annual tree hazard inspection
- Process project evaluation forms for park improvements
- Lead agency for CEQA review, natural and cultural resource management
- Assistance as needed from Northern Service Center, Sacramento headquarters and National Landmark program
- Historical artifact inventory and management

Jack London

Our shared matrix for success

- Opportunities to expand international audience
- Increase interpretive online presence
- Revenue generation strategies that are compatible with mission of park
- Shared natural resource management vision
- Demonstration of benefits of bigger tool box

How we measure success

- Meet revenue and expense goals
- 85% of visitors surveyed rank overall experience excellent
- Adequate number of volunteers to carry out wide variety of activities
- Increased annual hits to website as a result of public relations/ marketing
- Increase annual attendance and event participation

Jack London

Challenges

- Lack of resources to complete projects in a timely manner
- Big Bang Theory, learning to work with each other without all the tools in place "universe is slowly defining itself as we learn to respect and trust each other"

Planning for the future

- Creating a new model for community stewardship
- Strategic Planning Process

  <u>Marketing</u>: diversify audience of park users

  <u>Development</u>: public engagement model that is financially self-sustaining

  <u>Program</u>: strategic partnership for community relevancy

  <u>Park Experience:</u> improvements to replicate turn of century

Sugarloaf Ridge

Team Sugarloaf & State Parks Diablo Vista District

Team Sugarloaf
- Fee Collection/Kiosk Operation
- Campground Operation & Maintenance
- Interpretive Programming & Special Events
- Cultural Resource Projects
- Visitor Center Operations
- History Project
- Trail & Road Maintenance
- Initial Trail Planning
- Assist with Natural Resource Planning & Weed Control

State Parks
- Natural Resource Management
- Cultural Resource Management
- Water & Sewage System Maintenance
- Annual Tree Hazard Survey
- VIP Support – liability, worker's comp
- Road Project w/ 1478 funds

Sugarloaf Ridge

Our shared matrix for success
- Operate park to ensure resource protection and improve visitor experience.
- Expand park use by underserved groups
- Leverage skills of SEC and other Team Sugarloaf partners to expand knowledge and protection of park
- Work with other local organizations

How we measure success
- Survey campers and day use
- Paid visitors
- On-line reviews (mostly at yelp and tripadvisor)
- Email follow up emails to campers
- Continued protection of cultural and historical resources

Sugarloaf Ridge

Challenges

- Determining responsibilities
- Understanding approval process
- Conflicting guidance

Planning for the future

- Improved educational opportunities for schools and individuals (family hikes)
- Improve and expand trails
- New group camp, back country camping, cabins in park.
- Invasive Detection Program
- Expand knowledge of park through displays and tours.
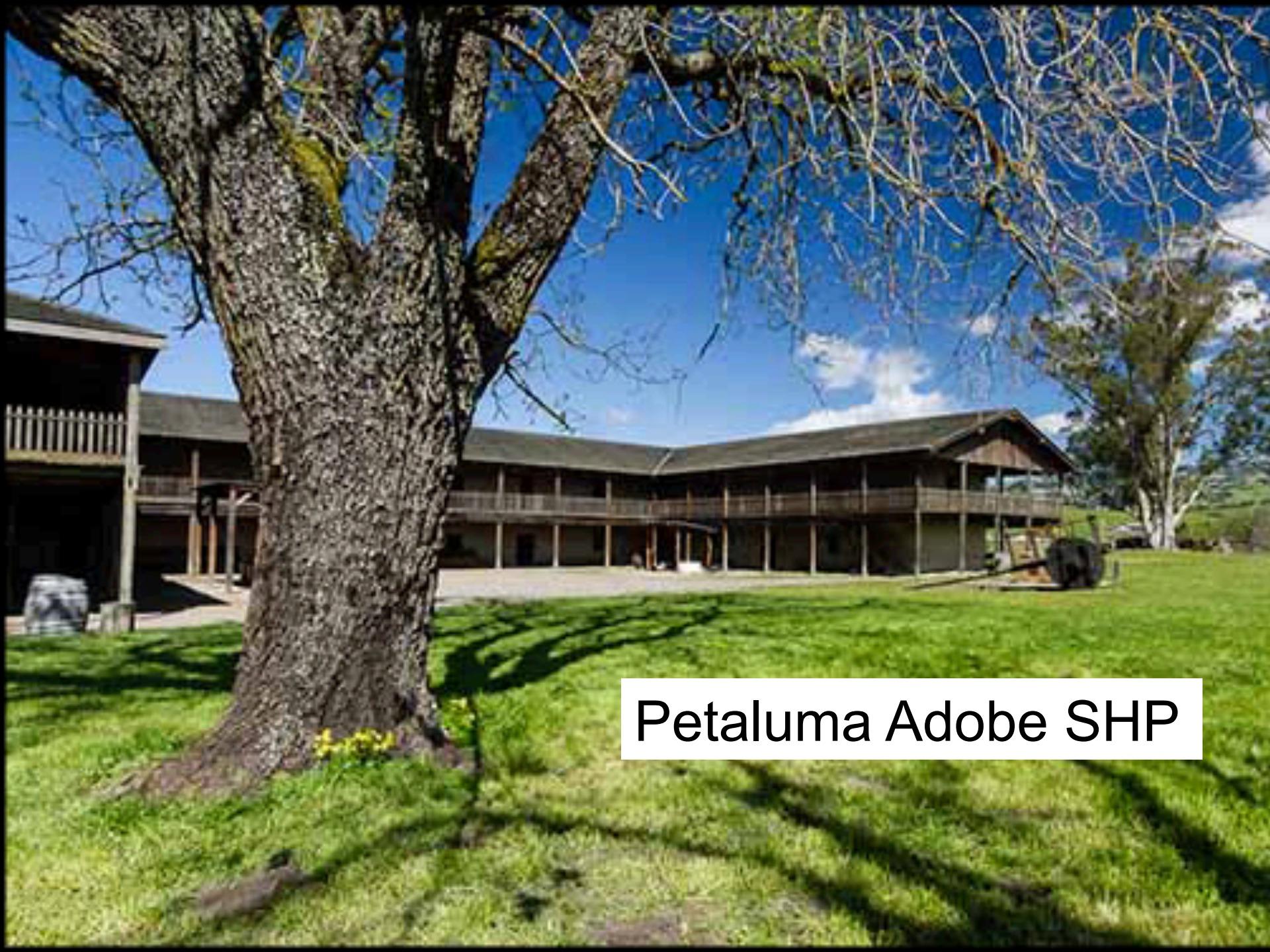
Petaluma Adobe SHP

Sonoma/Petaluma State Historic Parks Association & State Parks Diablo Vista District

The proposed closure of the Petaluma Adobe SHP in 2011 was a challenge which galvanized the S/PSHPA Board into action.

Board elected not to enter into Operator Agreement.

- 2011 Established a Fundraising Committee to raise $70k to keep the park open.
- 2011 Board established a Business Plan committee to study possible LT financial options. This later "morphed" into a committee to focus on needed maintenance, repairs and renovations
- 2012 Board entered in to Matching Fund Agreement to keep the Petaluma Adobe SHP open for an additional year. Expires in June 2014.
- 2013 and 2014 Board has worked to secure additional funds for the Petaluma Adobe SHP for deferred maintenance and repairs from grants and the Association totaling $25,500 which have been matched by State Matching Funds of $25,500

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park

How we measure success

- Raised $70k+ within seven months to keep park open. Resulting in:
    - Petaluma Adobe SHP hosted 1067 4th graders for the Environmental Living Program (overnight) in 2012 and 1000 in 2013
    - Petaluma Adobe SHP hosted 1728 students in 38 school tours in 2012 and 1529 students in school tours in 2013.

- Provide support to encourage increased visitation to the Petaluma Adobe SHP:
    - Tripled Association financial contribution to State Parks for two Special Events in 2014.
    - Sponsored an open air theatre production held at park in 2012 to raise funds and increase awareness.

- Crisis led to a better understanding of State Parks needs.
    - Meetings with State Parks staff revealed significant deferred maintenance projects including the deterioration of the walls of the Petaluma Adobe.
    - Other structures have significant issues. Working on improvements to other buildings within the Sonoma/Petaluma State Historic Park area including funding feasibility study for adaptive reuse of the Toscano Hotel in Sonoma.
    - The S/PSHPA can act quicker than State Parks. E.g. funding a study of the adobe walls at the Petaluma Adobe by Gil Sanchez FAIA, a nationally recognized expert on adobe repair and reconstruction. This was completed in 3 months

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park

- Challenges
  - S/PSHPA is now in the fundraising business. This is both a challenge and an opportunity
  - State Parks internal processes seem to become barriers to progress and timely delivery of projects. This is an impact on donors.
  - The S/PSHPA's work and role is not seen the same at all levels by State Parks staff. Many State employees see this as a temporary state of affairs and fail to recognize that changes are being made and there is a "new" normal.

- Planning for the future
  - Board retreat in 2013 facilitated by Randy Widera came up with three "Strategic Initiatives" to assist the mission of State Parks:
    - Marketing and increasing public awareness of the assets of the Sonoma/Petaluma State Historic parks.
    - Funding repairs and renovations to the Petaluma Adobe based on Gil Sanchez's report,
    - Feasibility study of an adaptive reuse of the Toscano Hotel.
  - Developing a process for being able to measure the results of Association and donor investments in State Parks.
  - Developing a "partnership" model which recognizes the value of the Association to State Parks and insuring that donations are not "hand outs" as a temporary fix but "social investments".
  - Building and sustaining an effective network with tourist serving businesses who recognize the work of the Association and State Parks and are willing to commit resources.
  - Participating in the Parks Alliance for Sonoma County.

"Help Me Get Plastered"

Fundraiser to Re-plaster The Historic and Educational Adobe State Park Building

Sponsored by:
Sonoma/Petaluma State Historic Parks Association
Lagunitas Brewing Company, Argus Courier

Date: Monday, May 5, 2014

Location: Lagunitas Brewing Company
1280 No.McDowell Blvd. Petaluma

Time: 6:00p.m.-8:30p.m.

Cost: $40.00 pre date, $45.00 at the Door.
Includes food

Silent Auction
Music by JOY RIDE

For Tickets Call: 707-938-4626 Sonoma Valley Box Office