



MEETING SUMMARY

Recreation Management and Visitor Use and Needs at Silverwood SRA

Meeting Details

Date: 1 December 2017

Time: 9:00 AM

Location: Teleconference

Objectives: Gather information on recreation use and needs as well as activities of the Mojave River Natural History Association at Silverwood Lake.

Attendees

Lisa McCandless, Stantec; Kirby Gilbert, Stantec; Leonard Wilson, Mojave River Natural History Association.

Summary

Leonard is a long-time volunteer with the Mojave River Natural History Association (MRNHA) and their activities and functions all take place at Silverwood Lake. The group was formed in 1983 and became a non-profit in 1984. The host activities at Silverwood Lake assist with the Nature Center. These include the annual Applefest in October, help run the Bald Eagle surveys, and help with running the nature center facility at Silverwood Lake. Leonard provided some general observations as follows:

- Leonard described that they are a volunteer organization but 80-90 percent of their funding comes from firewood sales they do near the Park entrance kiosk from May through September each year.
- They have been running the annual fall Applefest celebration for about five years and have had as many as 300 attendees. This year on October 7, 2017 they had between 70 and 80 people attend. At the festival they harvest apples from 100-year-old trees that were part of a larger apple orchard around the old town of Cedar Springs prior to construction of Cedar Springs Dam. They have an old apple press they use to make cider during these events.

- At one time, based on old photos Leonard has seen, there were between 200-300 apple trees, now there are about 50 left. The group is trying to protect and restore the old orchard as a heritage orchard.
- They do up to four group bald eagle counts a year in a program organized by Robin Eliason of the U.S. Forest Service, Big Bear Ranger District. This year's first outing was December 9, 2017. They coordinated the counts with others doing counts at Big Bear and Crestline. The group was taken out on Park's barges to work up and around the Miller Canyon area where most eagles can be found.
- In the summer the MRNHA staffs the Silverwood Nature Center for State Parks. Leonard noted the Nature Center building was built with bond money from 1998 but construction did not start until 2004; however, it was not occupied until 2012.
- MRNHA keeps the center open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays through the summer season for four hours a day. However, to do this they have had to fund a part time Park staffer to help (\$4,100 in 2017 was given to Parks for this position). There are very few displays at the nature center and Leonard says they desperately need additional display items to attract more patrons from the Park to visit the center.
- At the nature center they do some activities on Fridays and Saturdays to try and get more usage. This last year it included making butterfly feeders. Leonard estimated they received between 150-200 visitors on a typical Friday (where sometimes campers are also registering there) and yet on Saturday typical visitation is between 50-60 people and Sunday's often see less than 10 visitors stopping at the Nature Center.
- Leonard would like to procure a display case for the Nature Center but he needs more display items and suggested more could be done to celebrate the history of the old Cedar Springs community; submerged ruins are found under the lake. He thought the Los Flores Ranch held onto many artifacts and they could celebrate the Native American history of the area too with displays.
- Leonard thought more local school outings could be undertaken also if the Nature Center had more exhibits and displays.
- On visitor use and needs, Leonard noted that Silverwood receives two major types of visitors. During summer people come from the greater Los Angeles area and that period experiences lots of inner-city residents and brings great diversity to the Park. In the off season, outside of the summer periods, the user base is mostly local, from the high-desert communities. Many if not most days in the off season see less than 50 visitors a day.
- There is no recycling at the Park and they experience problems with more litter and graffiti in the summer season.

Devil Canyon Project Relicensing

- Leonard noted there is a growing demand for hook-ups at campsites, noting New Mesa is favored as it has hook-ups.
- There is also more demand for more parking at individual sites and patrons appear to want some sites designed for more than 8-persons (current limit per site).
- There is more demand by the growing baby boomer age cohort to buy RVs.
- Old Mesa area has a large meadow that Leonard noted could be converted to a larger site for small groups.
- Leonard did not feel the Park reaching capacity on Holiday weekends was a problem and noted the Park Rangers often hand out flyers to tell people where else they could go, for example to Mojave Narrows Park.