

**Partnerships**  
**President's Message – May 2025**  
**By Margaret Rhyne**

The California State Park Department of Parks and Recreation has a long history of working hand in hand with many governmental agencies and nonprofits to maintain the park infrastructure necessary to accomplish its mission to “inspire, educate and preserve.” Creating and maintaining infrastructure was a major challenge from the beginning and continues to this day as fluctuating political and economic climates create maintenance obstacles. But ironically, it was during a time of great economic and political upheaval that a federal agency was created that engineered many of the iconic California State Park features that we enjoy and admire today.



*Big Basin Redwoods Lodge Under Construction*

In 1933 the Civilian Conservation Corps was created by President Franklin Roosevelt in response to the devastation caused by the twin disasters of environmental destruction and financial failures that we now call the Great Depression. The “CCC” soon became the most popular of the “New Deal” programs. It put millions of young men to work on a massive building program in Americas' parks and forests.

The CCC gave enrollees a “... renewed sense of dignity and hope. They were not only earning a living, they were doing something important for their country, and they knew it. Roads and trails, campsites and social halls, amphitheaters and visitor centers numbered among the many features constructed by the CCC that provided the public with unprecedented access to the nation's natural and historic treasures.” ([Civilian Conservation Corps in California State Parks](#))



*Making Adobe Bricks for Mission La Purisima Reconstruction*



*Big Sur Outdoor Theater Under Construction*

In the 1930s, the CCC worked with California State Parks to construct buildings, trails, bridges and ramadas in many park units including Anza-Borrego, Big Sur, Mount San Jacinto, Mission La Purisima and Big Basin Red Woods. In total, twenty-nine California State Parks benefited from the work of the CCC during the Great Depression. Much of the work featured fine stonework that continues to enhance buildings, ramadas, and

boundary walls in many state parks today. (One of the favorites for our family of these construction projects are the three large stone and beam ramadas in the main campground in Anza Borrego State Park.) A complete list of parks and structures can be found on the California State Park website page: [Index of CCC features in California State Parks](#).

In 1942, man power demands created by WWII resulted in the disbanding of the original CCC. However, the spirit of the CCC lived on and in the Bicentennial Year of 1976, the *California* Conservation Corps was created by the passage of Senate Bill 1575, signed by Governor Jerry Brown. This new “CCC” responds to natural and man-made disasters and continues the work of the original CCC by supporting infrastructure work in our state parks.

In 2017, PRMDIA was honored to be a part of the reopening of Providence Mountains State Recreation Area, the home of Mitchell Caverns. The park was closed for a number of years due to long needed repairs. One of the most important challenges involved the rebuilding of the trail to the Caverns, damaged over the years by the often-fierce summer monsoons. The CCC and State Park Trails teams worked together on the trail from 2016 to 2018. They improved the trail for erosion, adding steps and walls and drainage structures. From Providence Mountains – Mitchell Caverns Park Interpreter Andy Fitzpatrick, “They also installed a new bridge that crosses the canyon just below the large and dramatic north natural entrance to Mitchell Caverns. Their work was/is outstanding. It has been 7 years now and the trail is in remarkably good shape. The stonework is of the caliber of the original CCC and visitors are impressed by it.” The California Conservation Corps also assisted during the reopening ceremony for Mitchell Caverns and PRMDIA volunteers who worked with them at the ceremony were greatly impressed by these fine men and women people. [Video: Reconstruction of Caverns Trail](#)

More Links: [The CCC and State Parks](#), [History of the Civilian Conservation Corps](#), [California Conservation Corps](#)