County of San Diego
Department of Parks and Recreation
FY 2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT






LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear San Diego County Residents,

It is my pleasure to present the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2025–26. This report highlights another year of progress, partnership, and stewardship as we continue our mission to provide exceptional parks and recreation experiences and preserve significant natural resources that enhance the quality of life for all who live, work, play and visit San Diego County.

Our parks are more than places to recreate. They are spaces where communities gather, families create memories, and residents connect with the landscapes, cultures, and histories that define our region. Guided by the priorities outlined in our 2024–2029 Strategic Plan, County Parks focuses its public services and community programs around the five key pillars of Inclusion, Sustainability, Empowerment, Safety and Community.

The Department manages more than 60,000 acres of parkland and nearly 400 miles of trails, offering countless opportunities for outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation. Our award-winning park system includes 159 facilities, ranging from local and regional parks to campgrounds, historic sites, fishing lakes, ecological preserves, and a botanic garden. Together, these treasured resources contribute to healthier communities, stronger connections, and a more resilient future.

Over the past year, we achieved important milestones that reflect our commitment to serving residents while protecting the natural resources entrusted to us:

Conservation and Stewardship: Added 600 acres of conserved land through the Multiple Species Conservation Program, helping preserve sensitive habitats and wildlife while advancing environmental sustainability goals.

Park Improvements and Access: Completed numerous park improvements and ADA enhancements, including the new Village View County Park and Padres Park at San Dieguito County Park and enhancements at Mt. Woodson Gateway County Preserve, Agua Caliente County Park, and Heritage County Park. These investments support our goal of creating welcoming, accessible spaces that meet the evolving needs of our communities.

Sustainability and Habitat Restoration: Continued significant restoration work in the Tijuana River Valley Regional Park, planted 2,180 trees in alignment with the County's Climate Action Plan, and continued efforts to remove invasive species and improve ecosystem health.

Community Engagement: Connected thousands of youth and families with meaningful outdoor experiences through programs like SD Nights, Women in the Wild, First Time Camping, and Nature Explorers, while welcoming over 230,000 attendees to community celebrations and special events.

Innovation and Service Access: We enhanced technology and visitor services by improving system security and staff access, expanding convenient payment options at parks, supporting campground reservations that generated more than 156,461 nights booked, and using trail monitoring technology to track approximately 1.28 million visits and help guide park planning and operations.

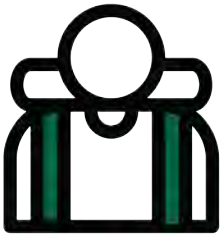
Together, we are building a park system that enriches lives, protects the places that make San Diego County unique, and creates opportunities for everyone to enjoy the outdoors. Thank you for being part of that effort and for your continued support of our parks and programs.

Sincerely,



Jason Hemmens
Director, Department of Parks and Recreation

BY THE NUMBERS

 **60,000** acres of parkland managed	 **398** miles of trails managed	 **159** number of facilities managed	 **230,962** attendees at 7,054 events
 **600** acres of conserved land added to MSCP	 **2,180** trees planted to support CAP	 **30** completed development projects	 **1** number of new parks opened
 **34,126** camping reservations	 **156,461** camping nights booked	 **1,280,000** trail treks tracked	 **1,878,636** website page views

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

VISION:

A parks and recreation system that is the pride of San Diego County.

MISSION:

We enhance the quality of life in San Diego County by providing exceptional parks and recreation experiences and preserving significant natural resources.

The County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation builds better health for individuals and families, enhances safety in communities, and preserves the environment so that people can enjoy clean air and water, rich biodiversity, and access to open space.

The County continues to expand its award-winning parks system, which features 159 facilities including local and regional parks, campgrounds, historic sites, fishing lakes, ecological preserves and a botanic garden. The County operates and manages more than 59,000 acres of parkland and nearly 400 miles of trails that foster an appreciation of nature and history. The department also implements the Multiple Species Conservation Program that acquires hundreds of acres for conservation annually, protecting species and habitat in the region.

The department was the first county parks and recreation department in California to receive accreditation by the National Recreation and Park Association for achieving high standards of operational excellence. County Parks is committed to its workforce, recognizing that employee engagement, training, development, and professional growth are essential to achieving its goals and empowering staff to succeed.



Department Staff form the number 80 at the 2026 Awards Ceremony in anticipation of the Department's 80th Anniversary in August 2026.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

$82.5M BUDGET

We promote environmental ambassadorship, health and wellness, safe communities and civic pride through thousands of programs including interpretive hikes and bike rides, educational workshops, nature discovery tables, classes, camps, volunteer activities, community festivals and more.

306 STAFF

$40.7M

Supporting how you live, work, recreate

Park and trails operations; Recreational and Interpretive programming; Special events; homeless encampment cleanup; Tree maintenance.

$5.5M

Capital projects

MSCP land acquisition; Trail improvements; New parks and facilities; Redevelopment

$9.2M

Protecting the climate and natural resources

Multiple Species Conservation Plan land acquisition and planning; Biological and cultural monitoring; Land stewardship; Improving conditions in Tijuana River Valley; Planting Trees

$11.7M

Infrastructure safety

Major maintenance, replacements, and upgrades, including dredging, drainage and facility improvements, drinking water, sewer and restroom improvements, ADA and playground upgrades.

$1.9M

Empowering the community

Youth programming, ADA-compliant enhancements; assessing community needs; inclusive communications

$300K

Protecting health

Water systems

ADMINISTRATION

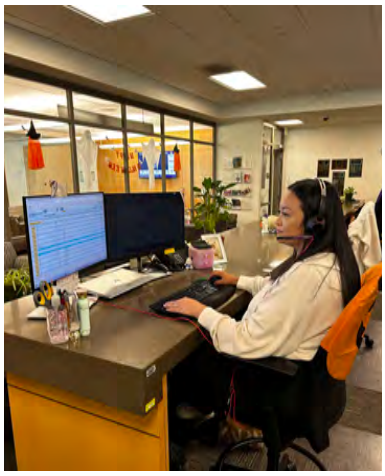
The Administration Division encompasses finance, marketing, information technology, customer service, and human resources. It provides essential support services that enable the department's Operations, Resource Management, and Development divisions to function efficiently. Through effective administrative oversight, the division ensures strong fiscal stewardship, promotes organizational effectiveness, and maintains the systems and services that sustain the department's overall performance.



Pay By Phone app at Flinn Springs

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Supported County technology goals by implementing digital solutions that improved services for employees and the community. Leveraged digital tools to improve customer service, increase efficiency, support informed decision-making, and reduce unnecessary work and waste. Improved account security and made it easier for staff to log in by implementing single sign-on (SSO) for the parks reservation system. Installed additional card payment terminals, giving visitors a secure and convenient way to pay park fees. Managed campground reservations that resulted in more than 156,461 nights booked. Tracked approximately 1.28 million trail visits using monitoring technology, providing data to help plan, manage, and improve park operations.


Staff use new tech for reservations

MARKETING

Ensured all public-facing materials and signage followed the department brand standards. Completed 382 graphic design projects that include multiple individual graphics. Supported department initiatives through website, email marketing, social media, and media relations. Promoted sdparks.org to garner 1,878,636 page views (630,090 unique visitors) and the monthly newsletter for a total of 24,336 subscribers. Increased social media followers by 21% on Facebook and 43% on Instagram. Supported public meetings and development project promotion, including ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Organized approximately 150 volunteer events that engaged over 2,000 volunteers contributing over 80,000 service hours, resulting in an estimated cost avoidance of $3.44 million. Hosted 80 volunteers at Agua Caliente and Vallecito County Parks for Volunteer Vacations to restore the historic stagecoach station. Partnered with St. Augustine Catholic Boys High School bringing over 676 volunteers to participate in a single-day, multiple location event resulting in over 2,000 hours of service.



Rotary Club volunteers plant natives, remove invasives at San Dieguito


Volunteer of the Year Michael Jackson - second from left

HUMAN RESOURCES

Advanced initiatives that improved access to services, strengthened employee support, and prepared the Department for future workforce needs. Modernized the Park Attendant (Seasonal) recruitment process by replacing the PDF employment application with a fully electronic SharePoint form. Redesigned the public Employment webpage to include a prominent "Apply Now" feature, creating a more accessible application experience for prospective employees. Redesigned the internal HR SharePoint site to enhance employee access to frequently requested HR resources and information.

Conducted comprehensive recruitment and interview processes for critical classifications, including Park Maintenance Worker, Park Ranger, Supervising Park Ranger, Recreation Program Coordinator, and Parks Recreational Supervisor. Supported departmental operations by filling existing vacancies and proactively building workforce capacity to meet anticipated staffing needs for upcoming facilities, including the Mira Mesa Epicentre.



HR hires Mira Mesa Epicentre Team

CONTRACTS AND FISCAL

Assisted Department staff in procuring twelve new contracts during Fiscal Year 2025-26. Assisted with the management of a portfolio of more than 50 contracts annually with a combined value exceeding $230 million.

Supported the design and construction of new parks and recreational facilities, facilitated compliance with environmental and cultural resource requirements, and supported the operational and maintenance needs of existing parks through the procurement and management of professional service and construction contracts. Provided contract administration and procurement support that enabled the delivery of critical park infrastructure, maintenance, and community services.



Contracts support new playgrounds



Marketing helps promote events like the Raptor Program at Poway Library

OPERATIONS

The Operations Division is committed to delivering safe, clean, inclusive, and sustainable parks that serve as welcoming community hubs. Through high-quality maintenance, proactive safety practices, environmental stewardship, accessible design, and modernized systems, the Division supports long-term resilience and operational efficiency. By fostering strong partnerships, expanding outreach, reducing barriers to access, and encouraging meaningful public engagement, Operations helps ensure parks reflect community pride, promote belonging, and enhance quality of life for all residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Nature Explorers

Conducted 33 field trips and connected 223 youth from the Lakeside and Spring Valley Teen Centers to visit open-space preserves and natural spaces in national, state, and County parks for improved mental and physical health.



Nature Explorers hike at Stelzer

Discovery Program

Provided 3,527 urban school students with nature-based experiences in County parks connecting students to the science and natural history of the local environment.

EQUITY PROGRAMMING

First Time Camping Program

Facilitated 112 first time, no cost camping experiences at five County campgrounds through the First Time Camping Program.



Family enjoys First-Time Camping

"Gramping" Kinship Camping

Hosted 68 participants representing 19 families on May 30-31 at Dos Picos County Park for the 2026 Kinship Camping weekend, also called Gramping, in partnership with Health and Human Services Agency and the County Library.

Comprehensive Tree Program

Planted 2,180 trees, prioritizing communities with limited tree canopy using California Healthy Places Index and CalEnviroScreen 4.0 data, to reduce greenhouse gases and lower temperatures to support the Climate Action Plan.



Volunteers learn to help plant trees

Women in the Wild

Hosted over 300 participants at 13 Women in the Wild events designed to teach outdoor skills in a fun, nurturing, non-competitive environment.



Women in the Wild at Warrior Hike Challenge

COMMUNITY AND TEEN CENTERS

Provided more than 5,200 program and service offerings to over 122,000 registered participants. Provided full day supervision and activity facilitation for 700 youth day camp participants during summer, winter, and fall seasons.

Fallbrook - Hosted Breakfast with a Bunny, Fallbrook Halloween Festival, Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, and Breakfast with Santa, attracting more than 2,200 attendees.

Spring Valley - Hosted the Spring Egg Hunt, Halloween Spooktacular Festival, and Winter Festival, drawing 890 attendees.

Lakeside - Hosted the annual Lakeside Halloween Festival and Lindo Lake Snow Day event, welcoming more than 600 attendees.

Lakeside and Spring Valley - Hosted Back 2 School Jam events serving 1,200 participants and distributing 600 backpacks filled with school supplies.



Fallbrook community safety expo


Lindo Lake Snow Day

SD NIGHTS

Delivered 340 events across 25 locations, including 6 outdoor trips, through partnerships that promoted leadership, healthy relationships, civic engagement, and personal safety. Created 70 youth employment opportunities that supported workforce development and career readiness. Engaged more than 20,000 youth and generated over 60,000 hours of supervised after-school and evening participation, helping keep youth off the streets during peak-risk hours.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Summer Movies in the Park - 17,992 participants at 127 events

Pages in the Park - 525 participants at 3 three events

Hawktober and Raptor Program - 15,000+ participants at 60 events

Hike-A-Thon - 372 participants at 5 ranger-led hikes

Fall Festivals and Events - 12,000+ participants at 35 events

Warrior Hike Challenge - 792 participants at 2 events

Green Friday - 100+ volunteers at 15 events

Winter Festivals and Events - 4,000+ participants at 11 events

Earth Day and Alternative Spring Break - 300+ volunteers at 16 events


Back2School JAM in Lakeside


Movie 'Moana' at Waterfront Park


Reading at Pages in the Park


Warrior Hike view at Mile 3

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

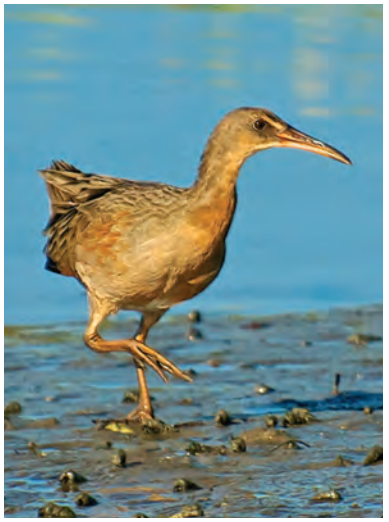
The Resource Management Division protects and enhances natural resources through land conservation, species monitoring, and science-based planning. The division completes environmental review and permitting for all department projects, expands and manages trail access, completes resource and public access plans, and restores habitats by removing invasive plants to improve ecosystem health, reduce fire risk, and support long-term sustainability.

MULTIPLE SPECIES CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Increased conserved land by 600 acres through property acquisitions in areas of the County that provide the most conservation value for sensitive species and habitats, while expanding recreational opportunities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving air and water quality. With the additional lands, County Parks now owns and manages over 60,000 acres of parkland throughout the region.

Continued tracking the region's most vulnerable species through the Targeted Monitoring Program, using the results to guide management decisions that help protect wildlife and support healthy, sustainable populations over time.

Completed a Resource Management Plan for the Rancho Lilac Preserve, a unique 900-acre preserve that will ultimately be conserved and added to the preserve system for the North County Multiple Species Conservation Program.



Ridgeway's Rail on Mudflats

TRAILS PROGRAM

Expanded the County Trails Program to 398 miles of managed trails, giving residents and visitors more opportunities to enjoy nature while supporting the Department's conservation goals.

Constructed the initial trail reroute of Old Survey Road 97 in Ramona Grasslands County Preserve to allow for year-round recreational access while protecting golden eagle nesting habitat and eliminating the need for seasonal trail closures.



Ramona Grasslands Trail Re-Route

RESTORATION WORK

Continued implementation of a habitat restoration plan in the Tijuana River Valley Regional Park to remove invasive plants, enhance native habitat, and improve natural hydrology. Secured a $1 million U.S. Navy grant to support the removal of invasive vegetation, debris, and dilapidated structures and restore 39 acres of habitat to benefit special-status species and enhance community resources. Secured an additional $2.35 million U.S. Navy grant to support a separate habitat restoration project to remove invasive plants that have disrupted natural water flow and restore degraded sensitive habitat area along streams and waterways.

Received an $80,000 grant from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Local Assistance Grant Program for habitat enhancement efforts at the Boulder Oaks Preserve. Improved conditions for the tri-colored blackbird, a rare species that contributes to local biodiversity, through vegetation management, invasive plant removal and the planting of new plant species.



TRVRP Monarch butterfly chrysalis



Santa Maria Creek Greenway - Inset: Trails Program wins California Trails and Greenway Merit Planning Award with Ramona Stakeholders Group

DEVELOPMENT

The Development Division manages park projects from concept to completion, planning, designing, and constructing high-quality park and recreation facilities that serve communities across the region. The Division leads the delivery of new parks, recreation centers, and amenities—from skate and bike parks to ballfields and campgrounds —while also maintaining and improving existing park assets. Through a collaborative approach, the team works closely with community members, partners, and stakeholders, meeting people where they are to ensure public needs are reflected in each project. All work is guided by a commitment to thoughtful design, regulatory compliance, and long-term sustainability, ensuring parks that are safe, inclusive, and built to serve generations to come.

COMPLETED/UNDERWAY PROJECTS

New Parks & Major Park Development

- Village View County Park Grand Opening
- Calavo Community Park Construction
- Bonsall Community Park Construction

Accessibility (ADA) Improvements

- Heritage Park Garden Enhancement - ADA pathways
- 4S Ranch Bio Basin - ADA pathways
- Village View County Park - ADA restrooms, parking, pathways
- Dos Picos Campground and County Park - Restrooms
- Los Peñasquitos Building Repairs
- Pine Valley Tennis Court - ADA pathways
- San Dieguito Padres Parks - ADA Baseball Field
- San Dieguito Picnic Area - Paver maintenance

Facilities, Buildings & Park Infrastructure

- Agua Caliente County Park Staff Housing
- Demolition of LaChappa Concession Building
- Jess Martin Park Water Tank Replacement
- Lindo Lake Photovoltaic Carports
- TRVRP Spooner's Mesa Culvert Stormwater Improvement

Park Amenities and Visitor Services

- Agua Caliente Playground
- Flinn Springs Playground
- Lakeside Ballfields Playground and Shade
- Waterfront Wedding Arbor Turf

Trails, Staging Areas and Access

- Mt. Woodson Gateway - Staging Area
- Potts Flume Trail Restoration
- Sycamore Canyon Trail Improvements

Sports, Fitness and Active Recreation

- Cactus Park Refurbishment
- Pine Valley Tennis Court Resurfacing

Conservation and Maintenance Projects

- Smuggler's Gulch Dredging
- Facility Assessment for Small Water Systems
- Portrero Park Small Water System

Feasibility and Planning Studies

- Off-Highway Vehicle Feasibility Study
- San Dieguito Pathway Prelim. Engineering Report



Development Team at the Mt. Woodson Gateway Ribbon Cutting



Grand Opening at Village View County Park



Calavo Community Park under construction



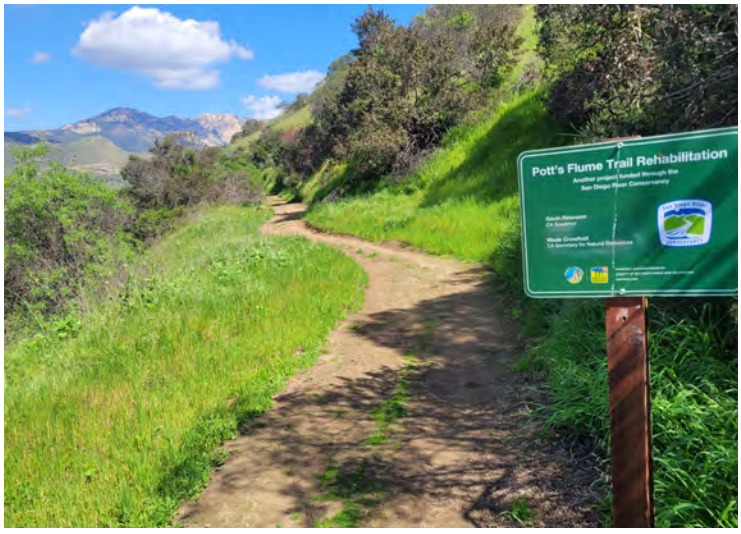
Bonsall Community Park under construction



New Lakeside Baseball Field ADA Playground



Opening Day at new Padres Park Accessible Ballfield



Potts Flume trail restoration



Jess Martin Park water tank replacement



LOOKING AHEAD

County of San Diego Parks and Recreation works every day to preserve our region's natural resources and enhance quality of life by providing exceptional outdoor recreation experiences.

In the years ahead, we will continue delivering critical infrastructure improvements, habitat restoration projects, and enhanced recreational amenities throughout the region.

We look forward to celebrating the grand openings of several highly anticipated community facilities, including the new Mira Mesa Epicentre, Calavo Community Park, and Bonsall Community Park. These investments will expand recreational opportunities and provide vibrant gathering spaces for residents of all ages.

At Heritage County Park, an exciting new chapter will begin as the park's historic Victorian-era houses are thoughtfully retrofitted into boutique overnight accommodations, offering visitors a unique new way to experience the park's rich history.

Through the Multiple Species Conservation Program, we will continue to advance regional conservation efforts by protecting more open space, preserving critical habitats, and ensuring future generations have access to high-quality parks and recreation opportunities.

We will continue to collaborate with regional partners to address longstanding environmental challenges, including restoration and water quality improvements in the Tijuana River Valley and at Lindo Lake County Park.

Through successful volunteer initiatives such as Volunteer Vacations and Alternative Spring Break, we will continue expanding opportunities for community engagement, connecting residents with meaningful stewardship projects that benefit parks, habitats, and trails across the county.

County Parks is also launching a new Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Voucher Program to help increase public access to this lifesaving emergency equipment and support safer communities throughout the region.

Through public engagement, strategic partnerships, and collaborative programs, we strive to provide safe, accessible, equitable, and inclusive parks and recreation facilities for all.

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