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PARK SIGNIFICANCE

Castle Rocks State Park has several values that give it statewide significance. The most obvious are the granite spires and domes, part of the 25 million year old Almo Pluton. The rocks are part of the same geologic feature in the nearby City of Rocks, a unit of the National Park System. The area attracts climbers from around the world, who come to test their skills on the spires, domes and outcrops of the Castle Rocks amidst a scenic, natural setting.

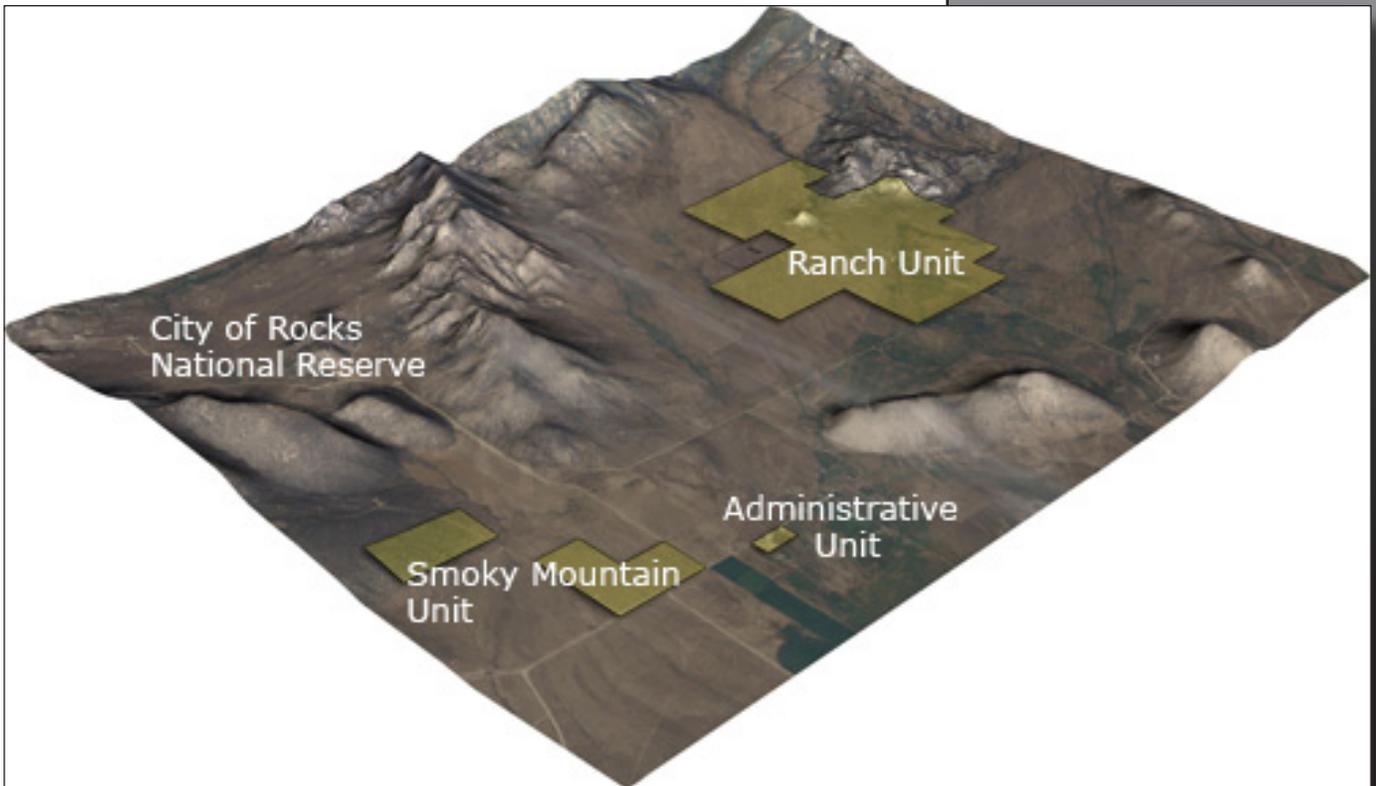
The cultural history of the area is rich with prehistoric, westward migration and early settlement

center at the Administrative Unit and the ranch house, corral and pastures on the Ranch Unit, are fine examples of ranching settlement from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Ecologically the park is significant. It is the northern most range of the pinion forest in the Great Basin desert. The only record of Ringtail in Idaho is from the park, and it provides habitat for the Cliff Chipmunk (BLM species of concern) and Pinyon Mouse. Sage grouse, now uncommon over their former range, dance on leks in the park during mating season. The Ranch Unit is also important winter range for mule deer.



Pinyon juniper framing rock formations in distance



artifacts and stories. The California Trail, a southern departure from the Oregon Trail, crosses the Administrative Unit. The visitor

Castle Rocks State Park, the newest addition to the state park system, is made up of three units that offer a diverse set of recreational

Computer model with aerial photography of Castle Rocks State Park with four parcels that make up the Park.



View towards City of Rocks from potential yurt location near Smoky Mountain unit

opportunities. The Ranch Unit is the centerpiece of the park and its granite spires and monoliths are part of the geologic crown jewels of the Northern Great Basin, which also includes City of Rocks National Reserve. The 1,240 acre ranch, which was in private ownership until 1999, is nestled in pastoral Big Cove at the base of Cache Peak, which rises above the ranch to more than 10,000 feet in elevation. Recognizing the uniqueness of world class climbing opportunities, surrounded by a wonderful ranch facility representing the cultural richness in the surrounding rural landscape helped motivate the NPS and IDPR along with other conservation partners to quickly act to preserve this gem of a setting for future public use.

Unlike the larger City of Rocks National Reserve, the Ranch Unit can only be accessed from a single

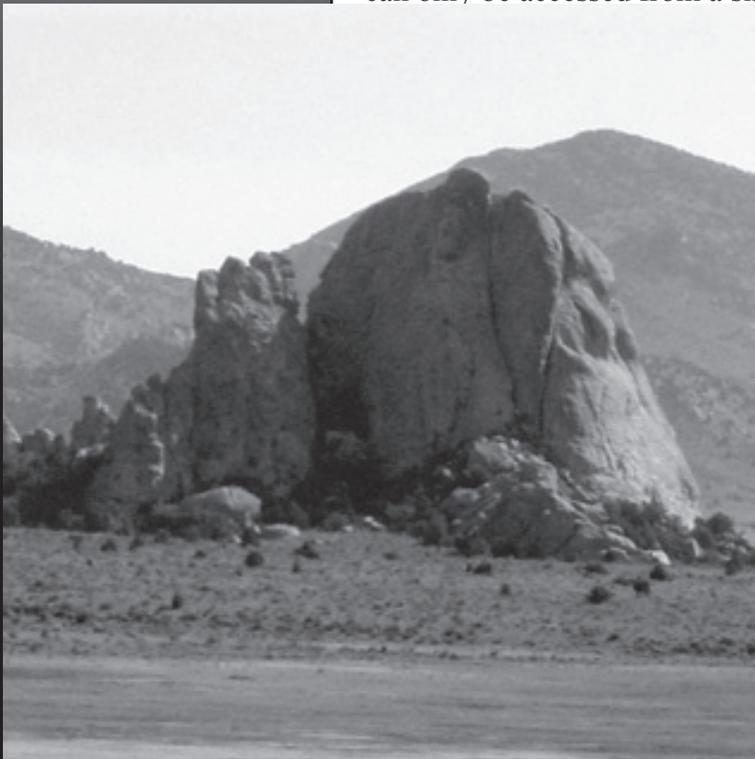
point where Big Cove Road (2800 South) ends at the ranch house. This, timeless example of rural architecture, guarded by poplar tree sentinels and serenaded by the babbling of nearby Almo Creek, is the jumping off point to climbing, hiking, riding, and other exploration opportunities.

Adding to the value and size of the ranch property, under an agreement between IDPR and the USDA Forest Service and BLM, an additional contiguous 880 acres is jointly managed as an Interagency Recreation Area. The coordinated management of these lands will protect sensitive natural resources such as nesting raptors, archeological sites, and the pinyon-juniper woodlands and allow for increased recreational and interpretive opportunities.

The 12-acre Administrative Unit, near the village of Almo has the historic California Trail running through one corner of the property. This gives the park another interpretive and educational opportunity for the California Trail. Currently this site houses the visitor center and administrative offices that service both Castle Rocks State Park and City of Rocks National Reserve. A maintenance building has been constructed at this centrally located site. Approximately four acres of the site is in pasture.

Smoky Mountain, the third unit of the park, offers additional recreational opportunities on the two parcels of land, totaling

View of Castle Rock formation at the Ranch Unit



240 acres owned by the BLM and managed by IDPR under a Recreation and Public Purposes lease. Although lacking the stunning granite monoliths of the Ranch Unit, the Smoky Mountain Unit is perfectly suited for development of a campground. A 37 unit, full-service recreational vehicle campground will be built in 2006.

PARK CLASSIFICATION

PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

All Idaho state parks are classified using the “State Park Classification and Resource Area Designation System” adopted by the Idaho Park and Recreation Board in August 2005. “Through park classification, the dominant character and principal values of an area are defined, and use and management policies are established,” according to the classification document. The classifications are: Natural Park, Recreation Park, Heritage Park, and Recreation Trailway. Classification of the unique attributes of a park is the first step in focusing the planning, development, and management efforts important in balancing public recreational opportunities and resource integrity.

Each classification has unique criteria (See Appendix 5A), a distinct purpose, compatible uses, appropriate development intensity and specific management principles. Consideration is also given to any national, state or

regional designations that may already exist in relation to the park. A classification system allows the programming, orderly development and appropriate use of park lands based on management policies.

CLASSIFICATION OF CASTLE ROCKS STATE PARK

The Castle Rocks property came into the state park system in 2003 through a land exchange with the National Park Service. The federal documentation of the exchange, in an Environmental Assessment (U.S. Dept. of Interior 2002), states that, “The intent of IDPR is to designate and manage the new park under its Natural Park classification.” That classification was affirmed unanimously by planning team participants during a charette in May 2001. The planning team consisted of individuals from state and federal agencies who had knowledge of the site resources and values (Castle Rocks Planning Charette Final Report, 2001, pg 21).

THE PURPOSE OF A NATURAL PARK

Natural Parks are established to maintain the ecological integrity of areas of Idaho possessing exceptional resource values that illustrate Idaho’s natural history. Natural Parks provide for the use and enjoyment of these resources in a manner that will enhance the understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of these resources for the enjoyment of present and future generations.



Saddlehorn formation in Ranch Unit

DESIRED VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Visitors to Natural Parks will be offered the opportunity to find solitude, a leisure atmosphere, observation/study of natural features, positive experiences in natural surroundings, and a friendly and safe environment. This includes the development of personal outdoor ethics, development of knowledge of natural processes, and opportunities for directed and/or independent study.

RESOURCE AND SITE QUALIFICATIONS

A Natural Park must contain natural resources of statewide significance. Statewide significance means that the unit contains unique, natural values of sufficient extent and importance to meaningfully contribute to the broad illustration of the state's natural history. These include natural (botanical, zoological, and geological) and scenic qualities, which are both beautiful and representative of the state.

A Natural Park should be sufficiently comprehensive to allow effective management of a community of indigenous flora and fauna. A Natural Park should also provide a variety of opportunities for public enjoyment in a natural setting with minimum negative effect to the resource. A park may contain resource values other than those for which the park received

its overall classification. These secondary resources should be of a lesser magnitude than the resources for which the park received its overall classification. The use and protection of these secondary resources will be addressed by subsequent resource area designations. The existence of these secondary resources should not unduly affect the determination of the overall park classification.

Natural Parks should be established where significant and unique aspects of the state's natural resources exist.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Resource Management - Management will be directed at maintaining the ecological integrity and interpreting the natural values of the unit. Management will seek to maintain balance in the ecological community and reestablish missing elements of that community, such as indigenous plant and animal life to the extent practical.

Compatible Uses - Visitor use includes both interpretation and outdoor recreation in a natural setting. In addition to being an outdoor classroom, a Natural Park is a place for participating in those outdoor recreational activities which can be accommodated without detriment to the natural character and features of the park and do not detract in any way from the natural scene. In the broad sense, park use falls predominantly in the aesthetic

portion of the recreational spectrum. Natural Parks are not intended to accommodate all forms or unlimited volumes of recreation use. Compatible uses could include hiking, interpretive programming, nature study, individual camping, group camping, picnicking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, grazing, equestrian use, boating, swimming and other recreational pursuits which do not significantly degrade from the natural process or aesthetic qualities of the area.

Physical Developments - Facilities required for the health, safety, and protection of users, as well as those consistent with compatible uses shall be provided. Location, scale and design of all facilities shall be complementary to the environment and to the values being preserved. Facilities should support customer services, enhance the visitor's experience and provide for staff operational needs. Typical development might include: group campgrounds, individual campsites, lodges, marina facilities, boat launches, swimming beaches, visitor/interpretive centers, program areas, trails, trailhead facilities, staff housing areas, maintenance yards, and other similar facilities.

PARK MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

A vision statement should provide a desired future condition of a park. While the vision looks to the future, a mission statement should describe the current focus

of the park. Park staff can regularly review the mission statement to see if it still accurately describes the management focus.

Park Mission Statement

“The mission of Castle Rocks State Park is to protect and interpret its geological features, ranching heritage, and prehistory. The park will be managed to preserve its intrinsic values such as scenic views, silence and nature. Through innovative partnerships, the park will provide appropriate recreational opportunities and public access”.

Park Vision Statement

“Castle Rocks State Park is an inspiring park with diverse opportunities. The park's unique qualities encourage discovery and solitude in a protected geologic setting, where the natural beauty, ranching heritage, and prehistoric culture enrich visitor experiences.

The unique natural, cultural and scenic resources are maintained as a living landscape to enhance resource values. Recreational uses are compatible with preserving the qualities of a vital remnant of the Great Basin. Innovative partnerships with governments, local communities, organizations, and users enable stewardship of park resources that will ensure enjoyment for future generations.

Castle Rocks State Park will be recognized as a special place where time stands still and the visitor is a

respectful guest.”

PARK GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. Natural Resources

- A1. Define the scope of ranching activities in the park.
 - Grazing Management Plan
- A2. Provide natural resource stewardship.
 - Hunting Management Plan
- A3. Provide archaeological resource stewardship.
- A4. Protect view of front massif.
 - Views into the park
 - Key locations within park

B. Community

- B1. Safeguard, in partnership with the local community, the rural landscape and its visual values.

C. Development

- C1. Tie together the Ranch, the Smoky Mountain, and the Administrative Units into a cohesive park.
- C2. Create visitor services facilities at the Smoky Mountain Unit.
- C3. Provide for access, circulation and parking.

D. Transportation

- D1. Provide better circulation between units, i.e. bike paths/ road lanes, equestrian trails, etc

E. Health/Safety

- E1. Provide for emergency access to the interior of the Ranch Unit.

F. Education/Interpretation

- F1. Provide interpretation of the natural resources, ranching history and archaeological resources.
- F2. Partner with educational and non-profit institutions to enhance Interpretive programs.

G. Recreation

- G1. Provide a world-class

Climbing Ranger Brad Schilling at Backyard Boulders in Ranch Unit



climbing experience.

G2. Enhance day use opportunities such as picnicking, birding, pine nut gathering, hunting, horseback riding, attending workshops and classes.

G3. Provide areas where groups can gather.

- Picnic Shelter at Ranch Unit within walking access of ranch house

G4. Enhance non-motorized recreational trail opportunities.

- Provide trail access to and through the park other than the main entrance.
- Provide a trail system within the park that accommodates different kinds of non-motorized users.

G5. Diversify overnight facilities.

- Expand campground facilities at Smoky Mountain Unit
- Develop Primitive camping at Smoky Mountain Unit
- Provide Bunkhouse at Ranch Unit in close proximity to existing ranch house
- Explore partnerships with BLM for backcountry yurts near the Smoky Mountain Unit.
- Possible conversion of ranch house into overnight facilities

H. Land Ownership and Management

H1. Assist partners in managing contiguous public lands so the boundaries between CRSP and federal lands are “invisible.”

I. Social/Psychological

I1. Continue and expand upon use of park for events such as RanchFest.

J. Staffing

J1. Provide adequate employee housing, and volunteer sites.

J2. Encourage the increased use of volunteers in development and programs.

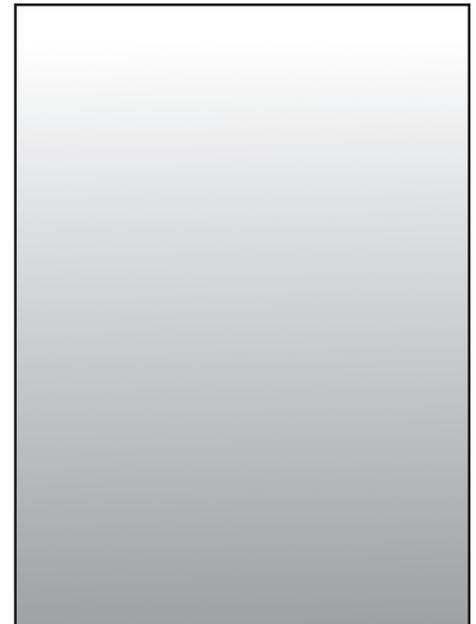
K. Land Use

K1. Manage livestock grazing for long-term health of pasture, and for wildlife (such as wintering mule deer, and sage grouse leks).

L. Accessibility

L1. Develop new facilities to accommodate persons with disabilities.

L2. Evaluate current facilities for potential for improving accessibility. Weigh possible improvements against priority resource values.



Looking at the Ranch Unit, with the Castle Rock and other formations at the base of Cache Peak. View from the Smoky Mountain Unit