

Health and Wellness

By: Christine Lafontant, Recreation Manager

Healthy Parks Healthy People US

Healthy Parks, Healthy People US is a National Park Service initiative working to reintegrate human, environmental and ecological health into the mission of public parks and public lands. Although *Healthy Parks Healthy People US* is based within the National Park Service, it works with national, state, and local parks to foster the health-related role that parks can and do play in our society.

It is the goal of *Healthy Parks Healthy People US* to reconnect humans with nature in a way that is beneficial to humans and the surrounding ecosystem. Although *Healthy Parks Healthy People US* is a new initiative, the mentality is nothing new. In fact, many of the parks were created with the intention of providing a health venue for US citizens.

Healthy Parks Healthy People US has 6 main focuses:

- **One Health**- human health is linked to the health of the environment and the natural landscape
- **Holistic Human Health**- includes programming that contributes to physical, mental and spiritual health, as well as social well being
 - **Active Living**- *Healthy Parks Healthy People US* encourages people to get moving outdoors. Physical activity helps individuals reduce stress, maintain a healthy body weight, recover from injury and live longer
 - **Mental/Spiritual Health**- Connecting with nature can greatly benefit one's mental and spiritual health. By encouraging people to be outdoors, *Healthy Parks Healthy People US* aims to improve the overall wellbeing of the country
 - **Nutrition**- *Healthy Parks Healthy People US* strives to bring healthy food options into public reach. Parks are encouraged to sell healthy options and to educate customers about their food choices. Additionally, public lands have the potential to bring healthy foods to an area with limited access through community gardens or farmers markets
- **Open Spaces & Natural Places**- efforts are not limited to the National Parks, but extend from the Grand Canyon to your own backyard
- **Environmental Stewardship**- encourages uses that promote the health of all species while avoiding those that damage resources
- **Access**- aims to provide equal access to natural spaces for all people
- **Collaboration**- seek expertise and resources from a wide range of partners in the public and private sectors



How are we at DPR going to use these focus areas to make San Diego healthier? We have so many facilities, programs, and services that are currently reconnecting people to nature but we always have room for more. Send me your ideas and we can start the *Healthy People, Healthy Parks San Diego* movement.

Parks Society News

By: George Hanson, President of the San Diego County Parks Society

You've probably heard the declaration (I don't know who first said it), "I was country before country was cool." Well, I knew the San Elijo Lagoon before it became a County Ecological Reserve. My dad, brother, and I used to like to go there to look at the ducks using the lagoon as a resting place during their migration. We called the place "Manchester" because that's the freeway exit we used to get there.

For a long time I've been wanting to re-visit the lagoon, especially now that it appears to be in much better health than it seemed for many years. Finally my wife and I went near the end of July, not the best time of year to go for birding, but certainly a good time to hike the trails of the reserve.

What we found was truly a pleasant revelation. I'm not a biologist or otherwise qualified to comment, but the lagoon looks and smells as if it's in good condition. The visitor's center, even though I'm generally not a fan of such things, seems to fit into its landscape in a thoughtful way and seems to me well designed. A large collection of flyers and brochures about the lagoon is inside, as was a helpful and friendly ranger on the day we visited.

There are some short trails in close proximity and some longer ones that take more effort to access. Long or short, the trails have excellent signage, as does the visitor center itself. Inside the lobby there are clear and helpful displays that explain the history of the lagoon and provide information about the plants and animals to be found there.

My wife, who is from Peru, commented that her native country has nothing like the San Elijo Lagoon. That's how much she enjoyed the place, even though she comes from a land of many natural wonders. We have other lagoons along our coastline, but this one is easy to access and easier to enjoy. When your schedule allows, go see this little gem for yourself.

