

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE II

# ***SANTIAGO OAKS REGIONAL PARK***

County of Orange  
Orange County Community Resources  
Orange County Parks

FINAL DRAFT

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June 2008

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FINAL DRAFT

## Preface

### Need for Update

The General Development Plan (GDP) for Santiago Oaks Regional Park was originally approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1983. Evolving park operations and subsequent improvements resulted in the need to update the GDP in 1990. Since that time, the park has grown to 1,758 acres with the addition of the 509-acre Barham Ranch property in 2003, along with the transfer of several Weir Canyon parcels. In March 2007, the Windy Ridge Fire burned through Santiago Oaks Regional Park. The designation of authorized trails, the acquisition of the Barham Ranch property, and the expansion of ranger duties are the impetus for this GDP update.

### OC Parks Strategic Plan

In December 2007, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved a Strategic Plan prepared by Orange County Parks (OC Parks). This plan was created to confirm OC Parks' future direction, including the organization, funding and other resources needed to successfully achieve the Mission of OC Parks.

### OC Parks Vision

Preserve Orange County's parks in perpetuity for the recreation, education, and inspiration of all visitors.

### OC Parks Mission Statement

As a steward of significant natural and cultural resources, Orange County Parks manages and operates a system of regional parks, beaches, harbors, trails and historic sites that are places of recreation and enduring value.

### OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals

The Goals provide direction for achieving the OC Parks Vision and Mission.

1. **Recreational Opportunities:** Meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with the preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.
2. **Natural Resources Stewardship:** Preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.
3. **Cultural and Historic Resources Stewardship:** Preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.
4. **Access and Connections:** Ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites and trails.

5. Public Communication and Education: Increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.
6. Collaborative Leadership/Partnerships: Create strategic alliances by proactively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.
7. Organizational Effectiveness: Align organizational structure and capabilities with the Mission and Goals.
8. Financial Discipline: Achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements and desired programs and services.
9. Public Safety: Ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.

### Park History

Santiago Oaks Regional Park sits astride Santiago Creek which is the main tributary of the Santa Ana River in Orange County. The creek was named by the expedition of Gaspar de Portola in 1769 in honor of St. James (San Iago). Santiago Oaks Regional Park encompasses a total of 1,758 acres.

This part of Santiago Creek has been home to humans for thousands of years. Archaeological surveys of the park indicate that Native Americans occupied village sites within current park boundaries and the subtle evidence of their presence is still to be found throughout the region.

Santiago Oaks also rests on a portion of the old Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana, which was granted to Jose Antonio Yorba by Governor Arilla in 1810.

J.T. and Alexander Carpenter, along with other local landowners, sought to improve agricultural productivity near the creek. In August 1879, they completed one of the first significant reservoirs in what was to become Orange County. A small dam of native clay was constructed on the seasonal creek to capture underground water and force it to the surface for year-round use. The original dam was destroyed by floods and later reconstructed with river rock and cement in 1892. The Carpenter and Serrano Irrigation Districts, which developed this early project, still service parts of East Orange and Villa Park. The dam stands within the park as a reminder of one of Orange County's pioneer water systems.

The original rancho has been divided into many parcels and has changed hands several times. Each owner has left a unique imprint on the land, from the grove of ornamental trees planted by Harry Rinker to the Windes/Blome ranch house and Valencia orange grove.

The Rinker and Blome properties, acquired in 1974 and 1976, respectively, made up the original park. The El Modena Hills Open Space acquisition in 1989 added

81 acres. A 509-acre triangular portion of open space land known as the Barham Ranch property was dedicated in 2003.

### History of Barham Ranch

Publicly owned for over 100 years, Barham Ranch is located in the heart of the Orange County Parks' system. Bordered by Santiago Oaks Regional Park and Irvine Regional Park, it is also adjacent to the Weir Canyon area currently owned by the Irvine Company, which has been recently dedicated to become permanent open space. Its 509 acres are largely steep and rugged. Covered with spectacular native vegetation, including majestic oaks and wildflowers, it is also home to a complete native plant community including toyon, lemonade berry, chamise, numerous varieties of sage, sugarbush, laurel sumac, yucca, and prickly pear. All these and others are found on Barham Ranch. In addition, the willow woodland habitat in the flood basin behind the dam has been identified as the most extensive in all of Orange County. It is a delightful birding spot, being home of species ranging from the water-loving great blue herons and egrets to the numerous hawks and owls, the endangered California gnatcatcher, acorn woodpeckers, least Bell's vireo and cactus wren.

In 1996 the Nature Reserve of Orange County designated Barham Ranch as the top priority acquisition to be incorporated into the Reserve System.

Historically, the area that is now the flood basin behind the Villa Park dam had a ranch house on the south side of Santiago Creek. The house was built by W.E. Squires in 1870. The adjoining lands were used for sheep grazing. In 1875, Mr. Squires sold the ranch house to R.M. Barham, and the name was changed to Barham Ranch. Eight years later, in 1883, the ranch was sold to two water districts, the Carpenter & Serrano Irrigation companies, because of the significantly valuable water rights. The area was referred to as the "water ranch." In 1979, Carpenter Irrigation sold their entire "one-half interest" of Barham Ranch to the Orange Unified School District at a price that was significantly below market value, in the hope the property would thereby remain a significant public asset.

The last two decades then found Barham Ranch owned by two co-owners, the Serrano Water District (SWD) and Orange Unified School District (OUSD). For years different developers tried to pave a road to Barham Ranch through the regional park in order to build homes and/or a golf course. The School District even considered building schools. All proposals would have destroyed the pristine wildlife habitat and seriously degrade the wilderness nature of all three surrounding parks.

In 1999, a booming real estate market and the construction of the adjacent properties led to a proposal to develop Barham Ranch that caused a significant conflict between the two co-owners. A development company proposed cutting

through Santiago Oaks Park to construct 600 homes on the property. A very complicated legal ordeal followed, which lasted over several months. SWD filed a partition lawsuit against OUSD in an effort to force a sale to the developer. A coalition of citizens' groups and environmental organizations filed suit against SWD, in a CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) lawsuit. The Attorney General for the State of California filed an amicus brief in total support of the citizens' CEQA complaint. Ultimately as a result of the pressures presented by the legal actions, the contract between SWD and the developer was largely rescinded.

For the first real time, there were opportunities for other groups to buy Barham Ranch for preservation. County of Orange funds had been earmarked earlier for the purchase, and Supervisor Todd Spitzer stepped forward on numerous occasions and expressed his commitment to preserve Barham Ranch. He unequivocally offered to purchase the land at the highest fair-market appraised value. Additionally, Scott Ferguson, from the Trust for Public Land secured a commitment from the State of California to purchase Barham Ranch. Within a few months of the onset of the conflict in 1999, all seemed to be falling into place to secure Barham Ranch as park property. Then suddenly SWD unexpectedly sold their undivided half interest to OUSD in January 2000, and all proposals and negotiations were required to start anew.

Notwithstanding this setback, the "Save Barham Ranch" leaders continued their efforts to purchase and preserve Barham Ranch. A multitude of hurdles were worked through, including a recall and a regular election of school board members. On August 20, 2002, after doing a comprehensive feasibility study, the Board of Trustees declared Barham Ranch "surplus property," and as such it was required that the school district first "offer the property for park, recreation or open space purposes to specified public entities."

Finally, at the historic -- standing room only -- school board meeting on October 24, 2002 Supervisor Spitzer made his final offer. The Orange Unified School District Board of Trustees then voted to sell Barham Ranch to the County of Orange for parkland. Escrow formally closed on January 15, 2003.

Through the efforts of many dedicated persons, investing time, money, and heart, Barham Ranch was finally protected to be used and enjoyed by the public for all time.



## 1.0 General Park Operations

### 1.1 County Ordinance Enforcement

Orange County Codified Ordinances are enforced. Park Rangers seek voluntary compliance for violations utilizing progressive enforcement techniques, including issuing warning notices and citations.

## 2.0 Fees

Parking and permit fees are established by a fee schedule set by the Board of Supervisors and are subject to change.

## 3.0 Recreational Uses

### 3.1 Hiking

Hikers may use trails that are designated as multi-use, hiker only or hiker/equestrian only. Hikers may not use trails designated with any applicable restrictions. Hikers may not use trails that are closed for maintenance or safety reasons.

### 3.2 Equestrian

Equestrians may use trails that are designated as multi-use or hiker/equestrian only. Equestrians may not use trails that are designated as hiker only or designated with any other applicable restrictions. Equestrians may not use trails that are closed for maintenance or safety reasons.

### 3.3 Mountain Biking

Mountain bikers may use trails that are designated as multi-use. Mountain bikers may not use trails that are designated as hiker only or designated with any other applicable restrictions. Mountain bikers may not use trails that are closed for maintenance or safety reasons.

### 3.4 Picnicking

A designated informal picnicking area furnished with tables, barbecues, sinks, tot lot, restrooms, and a horseshoe pit is available on a first-come, first-served basis in the developed section of the park.

### 3.5 Domestic Animals

Domestic animals (dogs) are permitted in all areas of the park and trails provided that they are restrained on a leash not exceeding six feet in length and controlled

by a competent person at all times (OCCO 2-5-39a). Additionally, no person shall free trail or loose herd horses or other pack or saddle stock in any park (OCCO 2-5-47c).

#### 4.0 Facility Reservations

##### 4.1 Weddings

A designated area for weddings and/or wedding receptions is available for reservation. The pricing is based on the fee schedule set by the Board of Supervisors (Appendix A).

##### 4.2 Conferences

A designated area for conferences is available for reservation. The pricing is based on the fee schedule set by the Board of Supervisors (Appendix A).

#### 5.0 Educational Programs

##### 5.1 Inside the Outdoors

Inside the Outdoors, whose instructors are financed through the Orange County Department of Education, provides educational school programs on-site.

##### 5.2 Other groups

Other groups that provide environmental educational programs may conduct them at the park after they obtain a contract or permit with the County. These groups must have valid liability insurance which complies with the requirements of the County's Risk Management Office.

#### 6.0 Park Management

##### 6.1 Law and Ordinance Enforcement

Orange County Codified Ordinances under Division 5 of Title 2 apply to Santiago Oaks Regional Park and as such are progressively enforced by the Park Rangers. All other local, state, and federal laws and/or ordinances pertaining to public and park protection apply and are enforced.

##### 6.2 Operations and Maintenance

The primary role of park staff is to provide public safety and natural resource stewardship through daily operations and maintenance programs. Park rangers conduct regular patrols on foot, vehicle, mountain bike and horseback. Park

rangers and the maintenance crew conduct regular inspections of the park lands and resources and park structures for regular maintenance.

### 6.3 Staffing

Santiago Oaks Regional Park is staffed with one Senior Park Ranger; one Park Ranger II; two Maintenance Workers; two Groundskeepers; one extra-help groundskeeper; one extra-help Park Attendant; and one Office Technician. The staffing level is subject to change.

### 6.4 Vehicles

The park has one ranger patrol truck; one ranger patrol utility vehicle; one maintenance crew truck; one dump truck; and one tractor. The vehicle inventory is subject to change.

### 7.0 Organic Orange Grove

Santiago Oaks Regional Park property has an historic five-acre Valencia orange grove, established in 1935. The conventionally farmed orange grove was converted to an organic orange grove beginning in 2000. The orange grove is certified as organic each year by the Guaranteed Organic Certification Agency (GOCA). The Valencia oranges are harvested annual by a contractor.

### 8.0 Trails

Santiago Oaks Regional Park provides twenty-eight (28) officially designated and authorized unpaved trails for a variety of recreational uses. The trails are identified with signage which may include the trail name, trail distance, directional arrows, cautions and restrictions. The trails are assessed on a regular basis by park staff. The trails are maintained by park staff, with assistance from volunteer groups.

Park trails are subject to closure for a minimum of 72 hours after inclement weather causes wet and muddy conditions or erosion issues. Individual trails in need of repair are subject to closure until park staff or volunteer groups can make the necessary repairs to get the trail reopened. Trail maps are available at the park office. The trail names and designations, which may be subject to change, are listed alphabetically.

#### *Anaheim Hills Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

#### *Arizona Crossing Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Barham Ridge Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail with portions of single track trail.

*Bobcat Meadow Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Bumble Bee Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track multi-use trail.

*Cactus Canyon Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track multi-use trail.

*Coachwhip Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track multi-use trail.

*Deer Trail*

This trail is closed indefinitely and may be reopened with certain restrictions and rerouting.

*Grasshopper Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail with portions of single track trail.

*Hawk Trail*

This trail is closed indefinitely and may be reopened with certain restrictions and rerouting.

*Historic Dam Trail*

This trail is designated as a hiker-only trail.

*Ladybug Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Mountain Goat Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track multi-use trail. It is subject to rerouting.

*Oak Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail. This trail starts at the park's Heritage Oak Tree.

*Pacifica Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track hiker-only trail.

*Peralta Hills Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track multi-use trail.

*Pony Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Rinker Grove Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track hiker-only trail.

*Sage Ridge Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Santiago Creek Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Sour Grass Trail*

This trail is designated as a hiker-only trail.

*Towhee Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Weir Canyon Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Wilderness Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Willows Trail*

This trail is designated as a multi-use trail.

*Windes Nature Trail*

This self-guided interpretive trail is designated as a single track hiker-only trail. This trail starts next to the Nature Center.

*Windes Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track multi-use trail. This trail parallels Windes Drive leading into the park.

*Yucca Ridge Trail*

This trail is designated as a single track multi-use trail.

## 8.1 Future Trails

This section is reserved for information on any future trails that may be officially designated within the park.

## 9.0 Resource Protection and Management

### 9.1 NCCP

Portions of Santiago Oaks Regional Park are part of the state Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP) and federal Habitat Conservation Program (HCP). Santiago Oaks Regional Park is located in the central subregion of the reserve. Park staff submits an annual work program and progress report detailing weed abatement and native habitat revegetation efforts to the Nature Reserve of Orange County (NROC). A Resource Management Plan will be prepared as a requirement of the NCCP.

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## APPENDICES

### A. Santiago Oaks Park Fee Schedule, Effective July 1, 2004

#### **D. Santiago Oaks Park Fee Schedule Effective July 1, 2004**

##### User Group Definitions:

See Section I.A.

##### Conference Center (Maximum capacity 150 people)

Half Day (Group I Users only)	\$140.00
Full Day	\$280.00

##### Weddings (Only)

Outdoor areas and Bride's Room Only	\$290.00
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East patio area and bridal preparation area for up to 5 hours plus a 1 hour wedding rehearsal.

Indoor/Outdoor up to 6 hours	\$570.00
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Full indoor/outdoor use, includes typical wedding reception

Wedding Reception, Indoor/Outdoor up to 8 hours	\$775.00
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Vehicle entry fee to park is not included.

Reserved time includes setup/clean-up time needed.

Reservations must be made in person and paid in full at that time.

##### Nature Center, Conference Room

Four (4) hour minimum	\$140.00
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##### Additional Fees:

Alcohol Permit (4-hour minimum)	\$25.00/hour
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The Santiago Oaks Conference Center has been authorized by Board resolution to allow the use of alcoholic beverages for special events, subject to issuance of a permit and compliance with all County license and insurance requirements, rules and regulations associated with the service of alcohol. Permitted after 4:00 pm only.

Staffing/security fees (4 hour minimum)	\$25.00/ hour per security guard
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1. All events serving alcohol (as authorized by the Board of supervisors) shall pay additional security fees.
2. Events scheduled during staffed hours but due to the nature of their activity require additional staffing and/or security shall pay security/staffing fees.
3. If private security, police, sheriff or other special staffing is required, fees shall be calculated at established rates and paid in addition to facility reservation fees.

A 24-hour advance kitchen may be set up at \$50.00 /hour during the setup period.

Additional fees may apply for ranger/staff presentation(s).

**Vendor Permit**

A vendor permit will be required from County Public Property Permits for all contracted services (i.e., caterer, bar service, florist etc). All vendors may be listed on one permit, however, if additional vendors need to be added after a permit has been issued, an additional permit and fee will be required.

**Overtime**

1. Additional hourly rates will be charged for events that have not concluded by their permitted end time. For hourly rentals, one additional hour will be charged for every 30 minutes over the permitted time.
2. Staff overtime will be charged at a rate of \$69.00 per hour, or the current calculated rate, per staff person needed to successfully complete the event.

**Surety/Cleaning Deposit:**

Deposits are refundable subject to County processing time and deduction of any cleaning charges or damages, applicable to reserved private, commercial events, opened or closed to the public; special events or activities. Not applicable to business/community meetings, public education or forums unless activity is catered or staff determines event exceeds normal facility usage

Events without alcohol	\$300.00
Events with alcohol	\$500.00

**Refunds:**

See Section I.D.