



PORTS

Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students

2015/2016 School Year Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its inception well over a decade ago, the goal of PORTS has always been to engage in meaningful and impactful conversation with a population that has little or no knowledge of or access to California's state parks. PORTS continues to deliver on our promise to effectively engage with tens of thousands of students by partnering with teachers, individual schools, school districts, county and state officials, nonprofit organizations, and private industry. This school year, more than 46,000 students interacted with California State Parks, thanks to the efforts of PORTS. PORTS delivered close to 1,500 individualized presentations to students in 100 school districts across the state. Interpretation and Education PORTS staff delivered 70 professional development trainings and promoted the mission of the Department to thousands of educators. Furthermore, PORTS staff continues to move "beyond PORTS" to modernize interpretive efforts across the Department, with the goal of providing relevant interpretive programming and media for the general public. Now more than ever, it's evident that access to parks doesn't necessarily mean physical. While we should strive to bring every student in California to a state park, the reality continues to be the vast majority of educators are not able, willing, or even thinking about visiting state parks. Leveraging the power of interactive videoconferencing as the only engagement a K-12 classroom will have with California State Parks is not only viable, it is necessary to maintain the Department's relevancy in California's K-12 education system. Likewise, utilizing existing PORTS equipment and knowledge to create an online brand, promote unified messaging, and provide interpretation through social media and live streaming has proven to be a successful outlet for the Department.

BACKGROUND

The Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS) program is California State Parks' K-12 distance learning program. It was designed over a decade ago to address a lack of access to parks by public schools. PORTS uses modern technologies to engage K-12 classrooms in real-time, two-way conversation, creating access to parks and forging meaningful relationships with students and teachers. PORTS is coordinated by the Interpretation and Education Division. Individual PORTS distance learning sites are operated by the ten participating state park districts.

DELIVERING RELEVANCY

California State Parks is being challenged through the Transformation Strategic Goal to "create meaningful connections and relevancy to people." The K-12 education system represents the broad diversity of California and allows us to reach an audience we rarely reach through standard interpretive efforts. PORTS, through distance learning technology and its outreach into the K-12 system, is bridging this gap between California State Parks and the K-12 education community. PORTS specifically targets outreach to Title I, low-income schools and communities in park-poor areas of California.

PARTNERSHIPS

PORTS has always been built on a solid foundation of partnerships. Long-standing partnerships remain strong, and new partnerships were formed or refreshed to support PORTS this past school year:

- Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) continued its support of PORTS programs in Orange Coast, Santa Cruz, and North Coast Redwood Districts and increased support for developing a new program in Monterey District. A contract has been signed for the upcoming school year bringing the total amount of CDFW support since 2014 to more than \$200,000.
- Humboldt County Office of Education pledged \$20,000 financial support for the 2016/2017 school year for the North Coast Redwoods District.

California State Parks PORTS Distance Learning Program-2015/2016 School Year

- Grant funding for the California State Park Foundation Summer Learning Programs included close to \$10,000 for the delivery of live distance learning programs for students participating in this popular and meaningful program.
- Maritime Museum of San Diego received \$17,000 in grant funding to partner with the Interpretation and Education Division to assist in the development of distance learning programs on a historic ship that will sail into ports that include several state parks.
- California State Parks Foundation continued to support PORTS through the Innovation on Demand Fund.
- Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation received grant funding to promote participation in Angel Island PORTS to Imperial County Students.
- PORTS partnered with Lawrence Hall of Science to gather data about the impact of PORTS on students' beliefs and learning pertaining to science.
- A long-standing partnership with the Field Trip Foundation utilized PORTS at the Seacliff Studio to prepare students for an in-person field trip to Año Nuevo.

BEYOND PORTS

Repackaging PORTS equipment, content, expertise, and talent to enhance district interpretive programs has become a trend. The ability to use innovative technologies to deliver interpretive messaging to a new and wider audience is at the fingertips of the districts that participate in PORTS. New opportunities—including virtual guest speakers, enrichments for senior communities, classroom-to-classroom connections and informal educational requests by classroom teachers—are being requested of the Department. Districts with the pieces in place are poised to deliver upon requests from the 21st-century audience. Districts not participating in PORTS have been encouraged to reach out to PORTS staff to learn how we can assist in facilitating digital access and engagement.

This year “Periscope” became popular—a mobile social media app enabling live-streaming to a worldwide audience. The PORTS team successfully piloted several popular periscope streaming events in conjunction with the Department’s Communications Office. The “scope” from a kayak floating over the kelp forest in Whaler’s Cove at Point Lobos attracted more than 2,000 viewers.

The PORTS Team is experimenting with 360-degree photos and videos. This media could potentially enhance the PORTS materials available to schools. Staff also met with Google to consider “Google Expeditions,” which package a series of these images with educational content for schools. We are excited at the potential and will consider this for next year.

Interpretation and Education Division’s PORTS Staff coordinated the Department’s first-ever Interpretive Technology and Innovation Training at Mott Training Center. Thirty park employees attended the training, along with 50 forward-thinking interpreters from across the country. The event was made possible by a partnership with the National Association for Interpretation. Session leaders from organizations including Smithsonian, Getty Museum, Balboa Park, UCLA, and New Mexico State University educated the group on trends and best practices—inspiring everyone to think about how they can leverage technology to meet the needs of the 21st-century visitor.

PORTS continues to engage in social media on Facebook. The PORTS Facebook page keeps followers abreast of current events with the PORTS Program and solicits input from friends and colleagues. Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/PORTSprogram>. At the end of the school year, the PORTS Facebook page had over 800 “likes.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAININGS/OUTREACH

This school year, PORTS staff utilized 70 formal opportunities to promote the program to teachers, administrators, and professional education organizations. PORTS programs and expertise were also utilized to broaden the outreach efforts of the Department, a trend we expect to continue. The partnerships forged between California State Parks and the educational community we engage are key to the success of PORTS and the relevancy of the Department. Select key promotional opportunities this past school year included:

- Imperial County Office of Education partnership to engage high school history teachers
- Series of professional developments with San Diego Unified School District's i21 Teacher Cohort
- North Coast Redwoods PORTS featured in Alberta Environment and Park Speaker Series
- Monterey Bay area MPA Collaborative and CEEIN meetings
- Featured at San Diego County History-Social Science Workshop
- PORTS represented at Park Ranger 150th Anniversary in Yosemite Valley

ANNUAL STATEWIDE STATISTICS

2015/2016 Total Number of Students (average of 31 students/class) 46,374

2015/2016 Total Number of Presentations (one class per presentation) 1,485

Participating Title I School Statistics

A total of 202 individual schools in California participated in PORTS programs in the 2015/2016 school year. Of the 202 schools, 133 qualified as Title I, low-income schools as defined by federal standards. Sixty-five percent of PORTS programs were delivered to Title I schools in California.

GRADE LEVEL

PORTS programs served all K-12 grade levels during the 2015/2016 school year. The greatest number of participants were in 4th grade (29%). This is consistent with traditional California State Parks interpretive programs.

PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

This year, schools from 33 of California's 58 counties participated in PORTS programs.

Seven California counties representing a wide geographic area, diverse populations and a healthy mix between rural and urban students rise to the top of areas that participate in PORTS. Students in the following counties account for 68% of all the students participating in PORTS.

- Contra Costa
- Imperial
- Los Angeles
- Riverside
- San Diego
- Santa Barbara
- Yuba

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

For the 2015/2016 school year, 100 California school districts participated. The return rate for school districts from the 2014/2015 school year is 61%.

STATES/COUNTRIES OUTSIDE OF CALIFORNIA

During the 2015/2016 school year, PORTS delivered programs to 2,028 students in 20 states across the country. This number also represents a dozen programs delivered to senior living centers, lifelong learning providers, a school in Taiwan, and a classroom-to-classroom connection between students in Humboldt County and Alberta, Canada.

PORTS DISTANCE LEARNING SITE STATISTICS

PORTS programs were delivered from ten individual distance learning sites in 2015/2016.

Students per PORTS Distance Learning Site

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Anza-Borrego	5400	7446	8390	8750	7360	8840	13900	8410	8086	8127	5805
Seacliff	5550	5030	6170	9220	9570	8860	8200	7945	6313	7827	8468
Crystal Cove	1100	2103	5510	5750	7440	7375	6350	5750	4891	7615	5584
State Capitol	255	490	1310	2820	4300	0	0	875	1190	2047	1805
Columbia	0	0	980	2140	2940	3535	4600	4590	4615	3793	5754
North Coast Redwoods	0	0	0	740	5360	6760	8630	7850	8179	8337	6942
Hearst Castle	0	0	0	0	290	1435	1905	2055	1166	1975	2624
Baldwin Hills	0	0	0	0	0	0	8150	7835	3645	4995	2753
Angel Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	3242	3039
Point Lobos	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3530	3530

***Total Number of Students Since 2005
382,711***

Site Summaries**Point Lobos State Natural Reserve Summary**

The Point Lobos State Natural Reserve PORTS program piloted this spring. Programs were first offered full-time in March. Monterey District hired a full-time State Park Interpreter I in February 2016; he delivered programs five days a week. Funding for this position is provided by the District and a Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Protected Area Education agreement. This program utilizes mobile technology, including delivering live programs from a kayak in Whaler's Cove. The program focus is on the giant kelp forest ecosystem and marine conservation.

Angel Island State Park Summary

The Angel Island State Park PORTS program uses a mobile videoconference cart to deliver programs from within the United States Immigration Station Barracks. The program was in operation three days a week, staffed by a State Park Interpreter I funded through the Bay Area District.

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook Summary

The Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook PORTS program was in full operation four days a week. It was also utilized for many afternoon and Saturday professional development/conference sessions. The presentations this year were primarily delivered outside using the BHAT mobile, an electric cart equipped with Wi-Fi and the videoconference equipment. The program was staffed by a State Park Interpreter I and fully funded by the Angeles District.

Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument Summary

The Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument (Hearst Castle®) PORTS program delivered videoconference programs solely from a studio using chroma-key technology. A Guide I on special assignment provided programs three days a week (hired November 2015). An outreach effort to local schools increased program numbers, and a successful pilot with senior homes across the Midwest proved to be an efficient repackaging of PORTS tools for interpretive use.

North Coast Redwoods District Summary

All programs were delivered from a chroma-key studio in the Fort Humboldt State Historic Park visitor center. The program was in operation five days a week, staffed by a seasonal Environmental Scientist Intern. Funding for the position was provided by the District, Humboldt County Office of Education, and a Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Protected Area Education agreement. The district hired a State Park Interpreter I (PI) in June. A new mobile program is in pilot phase at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park that will focus on salmon monitoring and watersheds.

Columbia State Historic Park Summary

The Columbia State Historic Park PORTS program was delivered three days a week. The program was staffed by a State Park Interpreter I (PI) and solely funded by the Central Valley District. Programs given to after-school students contributed to an increase in student numbers this year. While delivery from a mobile platform is possible, maintenance repairs to the vehicle hindered our opportunity to expand our operation.

California State Capitol Museum Summary

The California State Capitol Museum PORTS program was available for full-time operation this school year. The State Park Interpreter I utilized a new mobile, high-definition videoconferencing cart in the Historic Governor's Office and museum exhibit spaces. (Mention legislator participation?)

Crystal Cove State Park Summary

The Crystal Cove State Park PORTS program continues to use the "EduGator" roving videoconference vehicle. The program was in operation four days a week and staffed by a State Park Interpreter I, Permanent Intermittent (hired January, 2016). The funding for this position and program is primarily through District funds, the Crystal Cove Alliance, and Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Protected Area Education agreement. Crystal Cove continues to push the limits of mobile delivery, using iPad and wireless technology.

Seacliff State Beach Summary

The Seacliff State Beach PORTS studio delivered videoconference programs solely using chroma-key technology. The studio was in operation four days a week and staffed by a State Park Interpreter I (PI). The Santa Cruz District was successful in upgrading the PORTS position to a State Park Interpreter I, PI.

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Summary

The Anza-Borrego Desert State Park PORTS program was delivered using a chroma-key studio housed at the Stout Research Center inside Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. This program was in full operation and delivered by a State Park Interpreter I, Permanent Intermittent. This position and program is primarily funded by the District and the Anza-Borrego Foundation.

PORTS TEACHER SURVEY

The Department uses a standardized School Group Program Evaluation for school group interpretive programs throughout the state. PORTS staff has modified the standard form over time to meet the needs of this specialized program. This year PORTS developed their survey on Google Forms. The survey was administered by PORTS interpreters via email link after programs were delivered. This greatly increased the responses we received for our survey compared to previous years. We received 325 responses this school year, a 10% increase from last year.

The questions on the teacher survey examine the program's overall usability; the relevance of its instructional materials; the effectiveness of its live presenters; the efficiency of scheduling and logistics; and the technology tools for increasing student appreciation of California State Parks values.

Summary of key results:

- 74% of participants gave PORTS the highest grade for "Overall Program Experience"
- 69.5% of participants gave PORTS the highest grade for "Videoconference Presentation"
- 51% of participants said they used the PORTS online lessons; 57% of those gave the "Online Lessons" the highest grade
- 73.5% of participants gave PORTS the highest grade for "Scheduling Process and Logistics"
- 45% of teachers said they used a laptop computer to connect to the live videoconference
- **77% of participants said they were not able to go on a field trip to a California State Park this school year.**

CONCLUSION

The evolution of PORTS has always been a key to the success of the program. As the Department continues its transformation efforts, PORTS, too, evolves to continue to provide an important product to a diverse audience with a limited ability to interact with California State Parks. Through high-quality interpretive programs that employ 21st century technology, the PORTS Program will continue to create meaningful connections and relevancy to people—thus meeting the goals of the Transformation Initiatives.

Furthermore, PORTS has always stood for something larger than just the live videoconferencing presentation. PORTS is a movement. PORTS Program staff will continue to manage the bread-and-butter K-12 classroom programs that built the foundation of the Department's interpretive technology approach; while they also take on the added responsibility of repackaging their talents to deliver interpretive messaging to the general public, using the knowledge gained over the years to improve district interpretive programs through the effective use of modern tools and technique.