



April 2024

Annual Report 2023-2024



Department of Public Works -
Special Districts
County Service Area 120

San Bernardino Countywide Vision Statement

We envision a complete county that capitalizes on the diversity of its people, its geography, and its economy to create a broad range of choices for its residents in how they live, work, and play.

We envision a vibrant economy with a skilled workforce that attracts employers who seize the opportunities presented by the county's unique advantages and provide the jobs that create countywide prosperity.

We envision a sustainable system of high-quality education, community health, public safety, housing, retail, recreation, arts and culture, and infrastructure, in which development complements our natural resources and environment.

We envision a model community which is governed in an open and ethical manner, where great ideas are replicated and brought to scale, and all sectors work collaboratively to reach shared goals.

From our valleys, across our mountains, and into our deserts, we envision a county that is a destination for visitors and a home for anyone seeking a sense of community and the best life has to offer.

Our Mission

To provide management for conservation, preservation, and mitigation properties within County Service Area 120 by providing ongoing protection of the natural ecosystem and habitats, through stewardship and education.



Tom, Randy, and Ron in May '24



Tom Slanes 2024



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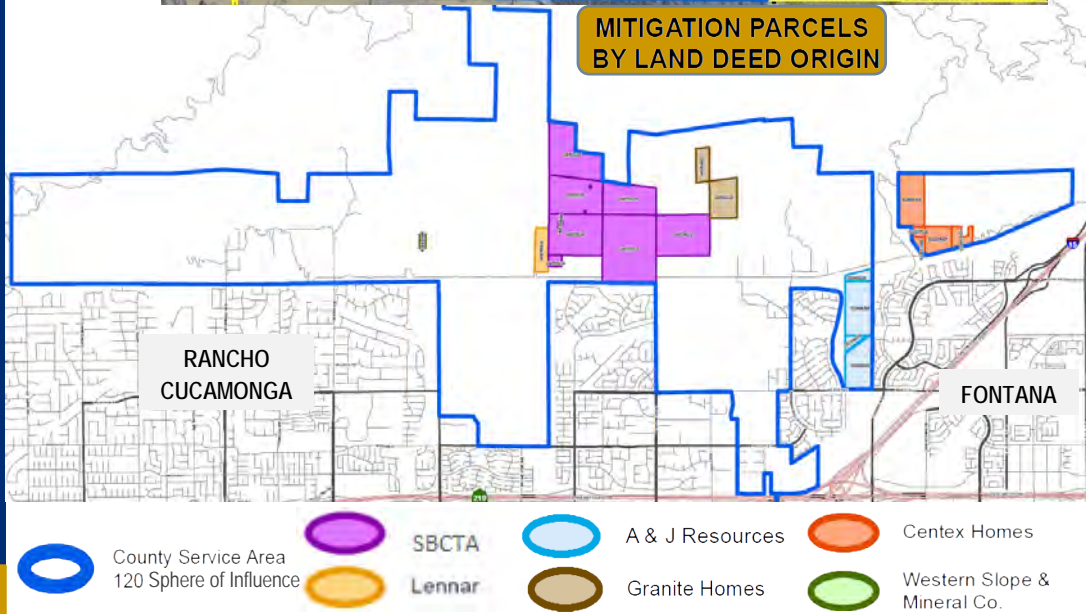
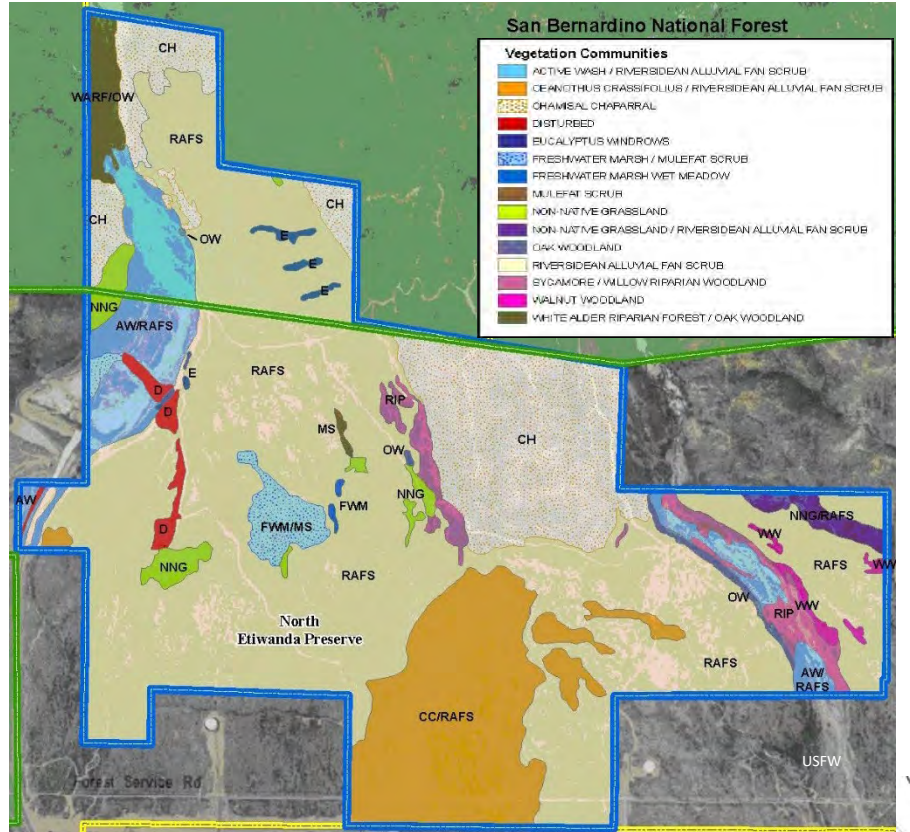


Introduction

County Service Area 120 (CSA 120) spans a 9,557 acre sphere area at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, located north of the cities of Rancho Cucamonga and Fontana. The Special Districts Division of San Bernardino County Public Works (SDD) is responsible for managing 18 conservation easements, encapsulating just over 1,200 acres. While each property is managed according to its individual mitigation requirement, the larger contiguous body of properties (SBCTA) created the North Etiwanda Preserve (NEP) in 1998. The NEP was formed to provide mitigation lands for the development of the 210 freeway, resulting in the conservation of 762 acres of habitat. In 2009, a centralized trail system and minor educational amenities were created to deter some of the damaging illegal activities occurring at the site, while fostering a stewardship ethic for the environment. Of the multiple mitigation properties managed by SDD, the NEP is the only area that warrants public access and visitorship.

The habitat composition of CSA 120 is primarily that of the highly endangered Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS) with several sub-habitat areas (Chaparral, Freshwater Marsh, Riparian, Disturbed Grassland, etc.). This habitat is historically known to have been home to over 18 federally and state protected species such as the California Gnatcatcher, San Bernardino Merriam's Kangaroo Rat, Plummer's Mariposa Lily, Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, Parry's Spineflower, Mountain Yellow-Legged Tree Frog, etc.

Origin of Land Deeds	Acceptance	Total Acreage	Mitigation Conditions
SBCTA	1998	762	RAFSS Protection
Lennar Comm.	2003	32.93	RAFSS Protection
A & J Resources	2004	172	Open Space (OS)
Granite Homes	2005	86.15	OS/ Habitat Preservation
Centex Homes	2005	149.3	OS/ Habitat Preservation
Western Slope & Mineral Co.	2010	5	OS/ Habitat Preservation



Western Fence Lizard
(*Sceloporus occidentalis*)



May 2024



March 2024

Plummer's Mariposa Lily
(*Calochortus plummerae*)



Management

Management Challenges	New Management Measure(s)	Noticeable Effect(s)
Visitor Spending	-A fee-based parking initiated in 2021. -New parking barriers installed. -Starlink (projected) system to aid connectivity.	- Only 30-50% of visitors pay the fee due to connectivity problems. New WIFI service is urgently needed to maximize revenue.
Dogs on Site	-Staff and Stewards actively work to educate persons on site and through web portals. -Posted signs and social media coverage of adverse impact of pets in the preserve.	-Seen a slight decline in the number of dogs brought to the NEP. Volunteers once reported 5-7 dogs per visit, while records now indicate less than 1-2 per visit (varies by month).
Graffiti	-All photos are stored in a database and forwarded to the Sheriff for enforcement. -Removal often involves an incident report and depending on the sensitivity of the area, low-impact sand blasting may be administered.	-Graffiti is often removed in a timely fashion -Impact currently remains steady, occurring about once every 1-3 months. -Increased incidents of graffiti in early spring. Steady in the summer (less visitors).
Illegal Plant Harvesting	-Report occurrences to the Sheriff or Code Enforcement -District staff and Stewards often educate harvesters of the rules and will escort them to the authority and/or will confiscate the plant material.	-A noticeable decline in the poaching and harvesting of sage. -The incidents are related to market value of sage and criminal penalties per value collected. This ratio drives this process.
Invasive Species	-Active hand removal of invasive species by special groups, Stewards, and at cleanups. -Grading of the road by heavy equipment brings invasive seeds to the preserve.	-Since the fire, invasive mustard and thistles plague the site, but drought seems to be taking a toll, allowing natives to propagate. An invasive mustard is hard to eradicate.
Littering	-Staff and Stewards regularly patrol parking lot, kiosks, and trail areas removing litter.	-Trash remains constant especially on the waterfall trail in the NEP and USFS area. -New trash cans installed (recycling included).
Vehicle Intrusion	-Most vehicular intrusions occur in the West Loop of NEP where the entry physically unobstructed. -A barrier gate was installed in 2024.	-Intrusions appear to be joy-ride related but majority of illegal harvesting occurs after closure. Awaiting results...



Most of the discarded trash was found in near the waterfalls.



Biology



View of the hiking trail at the Etiwanda Preserve in early February

Committed to Conservation

The Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD) obtained a crucial permit from San Bernardino County in July of 2023 to initiate a vital project aimed at mitigating invasive plant species within the Etiwanda Preserve. The permit represents a step towards safeguarding the ecosystem of the preserve. The IERCD's efforts, combined with the county's endorsement, demonstrate a collective commitment to preserving the native flora and fauna of the Etiwanda Preserve. The IERCD will be working diligently to ensure that invasive species are effectively managed and the Preserve's biodiversity is preserved for generations to come.



Calling All Nature Enthusiasts and Scientists!

Before the pandemic hit, the North Etiwanda Preserve was buzzing with the presence of college students, college professors, scientists, and nature enthusiasts who visited regularly to conduct ecological and biological studies. It was a hub of research and a sanctuary for biodiversity exploration. Despite a three year pause, the research resumed in early 2024 with class projects from Chaffey College, Pitzer College, and other learning organizations.

NEP is currently conducting its own dispersion and habitat study of Big Berry Manzanitas in the NW corner of the preserve.

Permits Issued

- Mitigation of Invasive Plants.
- Big Berry Manzanita Habitat study 2024.
- Inland Empire Resource Conservation District - July 2023-24
- Pomona College study of Gene Flow in Suburban Coyotes population (published 2023) author: Wallace Meyer. (<https://doi.org/10.3390/d15040498>)

Student Projects

Chaffey College students conducted several studies under the direction of park ranger Tomasz Stanek. Six students wrote extensive papers on various topics related to NEP history, ethnobotany, and fauna in the spring of 2024. The projects were written by: A. Sudhakar Evan Hou, Elijah Vazquez, Lyla Pinedo, Madison McNally, and Sara Montoya.



Volunteerism

Now is the time to revive the spirit of volunteerism! The North Etiwanda Preserve extends a warm invitation to all nature enthusiasts and community members to return and continue the vital work of preserving and restoring our cherished natural sanctuary. The Preserve is eager to welcome back volunteers with open arms. Whether you're an experienced volunteer or just beginning your journey in nature conservation, your dedication is invaluable. Together, we can revive North Etiwanda Preserve as a vibrant hub for volunteerism, where the community comes together to protect and restore this natural gem. Our regular volunteers: Tom, Art, and Ken, continue their efforts with trimming the overgrown vegetation on NEP trails, maintaining our bathroom facilities, and are very helpful with general upkeep of the preserve.

For details on how to volunteer, please, follow us on Facebook, or contact: tomasz.stanek@dpw.sbcounty.gov, nep@specialdistricts.org, or North Etiwanda Preserve Management.

A big thank you to our regular support groups!



A typical amount of daily trash taken out of the NEP. The volunteer events result in 2-3 13 gal-sized trash bags taken out of our main trail.

Tri-Annual Cleanup Events

World Wetlands Day

1st Friday in February

Endangered Species Day

3rd Friday in May

Make a Difference Day

Last Saturday in October



Volunteers and staff work together to clean the NEP trails in May of 2024.

Looking to Get More Involved?

Each week the Preserve is visited by hundreds of people looking to get some fresh air, maybe even a little exercise, but ultimately develop a deeper connection with nature. District-certified stewards and community volunteers work daily to support the beautification of the area, while educating visitors on the things that make the NEP unique.

In addition, volunteers are encouraged to get involved in areas of the NEP that interest them most. There is always a need for trail cleaning, photography, educational programs, restoration, and so much more.

Think this might be something for you? Email us at...

tomasz.stanek@dpw.sbcounty.gov



Education

Students at the North Etiwanda Preserve

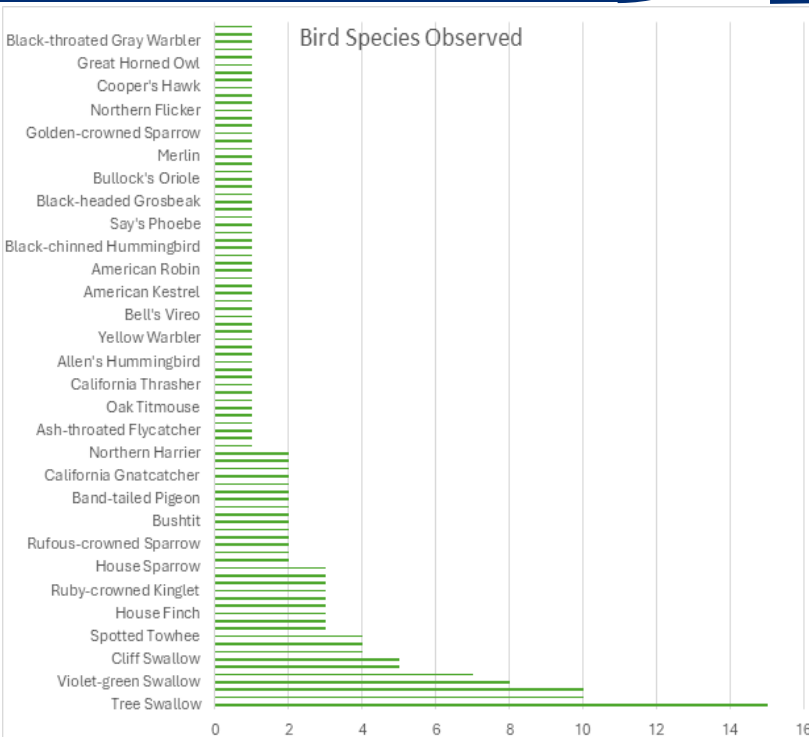
Hosting a group of students and parents is nothing out of ordinary for the NEP rangers. The preserve offers excellent ecological lessons for young students and their parents in the area of plant biology, plant dispersion, climate adjustment, predation, and water consumption. To an untrained eye, the alluvial dry vegetation seems like a wasteland ready for some sort of improvement (e.g., planting of trees, or projecting further development). Despite these assumptions, most who come in contact with a NEP researcher or ranger quickly learn the tremendous value of the area. The lessons in the preserve provided clear evidence of plants' adaptation techniques, useful ethnobotanical information, and a treasure trove of interdependent plant and animal species.



NEP educators lead the Sage Oak group on a field trip at the Preserve.

Educate ♦ Appreciate ♦ Nature

2023-2024



Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca* – Mike Brossart 2024



Financial

CSA 120 Endowment Interest Earnings

Year	Total Interest	Interest Rate
2018	\$20,168	1.25%
2019	\$31,900	1.97%
2020	\$32,415	1.96%
2021	\$23,597	1.40%
2022	\$12,761	0.75%
2023	\$29,352	1.70%
2024	\$64,722	3.70%
Average	\$30,702	1.82%

Source: Consolidated NEP Endowment Data, 2024.

The preserve maintains a permanent reserve of endowment funds in the amount of **\$1,594,250.00**. The interest earned from this amount becomes a part of an operating budget each year.

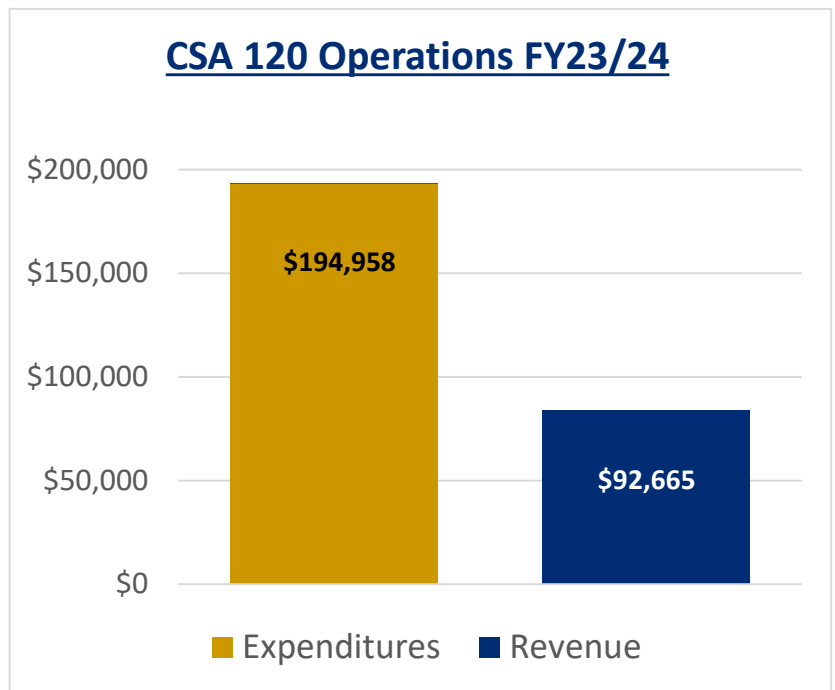
	Balance	Excess of Permanent Amount
Permanent Amount	\$1,594,250.00	
Cash Balance 7/1/2023	\$1,751,566.20	\$157,316.20
Cash Balance 7/1/2024	\$1,816,287.97	\$222,037.97

Maintaining the Checks and Balances

The long-term operation and maintenance requirements are dictated by the North Etiwanda Preserve Management Plan (MP). At the time of property acceptance, a corresponding endowment was provided to achieve conservation goals identified in the MP. The endowment maintains a minimum balance, which consists of the combined total of all mitigation funds accepted. The interest earnings are redirected into the operating budget for the Preserve.

Mitigation Property Share of Endowment Funds	
SBCTA	43.57%
Centex Homes	23.23%
A & J Resources	13.69%
Granite Homes	13.42%
Lennar	5.33%
Western Slope & Mineral Company	0.78%

CSA 120 Operations FY23/24



The graph above demonstrates the actual revenues and expenditures for CSA 120. In-kind services were not quantified here due to the drop in volunteers since March of 2020. The amount of volunteer assistance provides economic relief on the district budget. Expenditures are high due to depreciation of land. In 2021, parking fees were introduced. Park Staff ensured that vehicles that park at the Preserve paid for a day-pass each day they parked in the parking lot. Parking fees are expected to bring approximately \$80,000 in fee revenue per year to the Preserve.

Expenditures	Revenues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration/Staffing, Auditing, Brochures, County Counsel, HCF Grant, LAFCO, Legal Notices, O&M/Cleanups, Real Estate Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endowment Interest Earnings, In-Kind Services, Parking Fees Collected

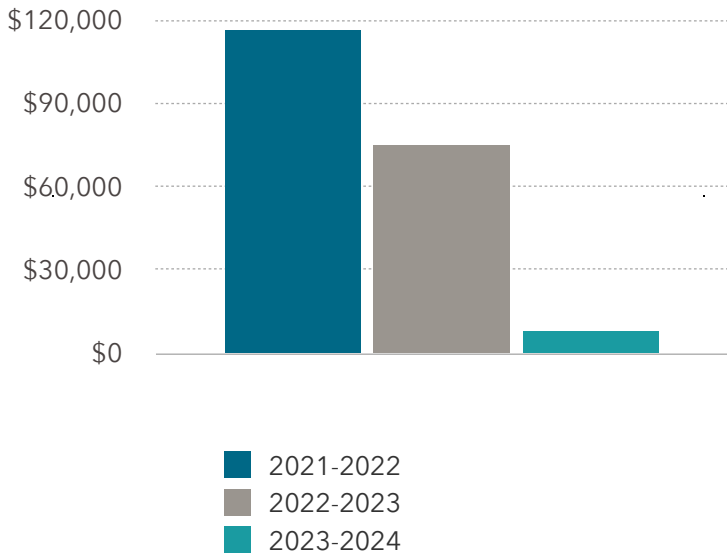


NEP Costs and Revenue Table for years 2021 - 2024

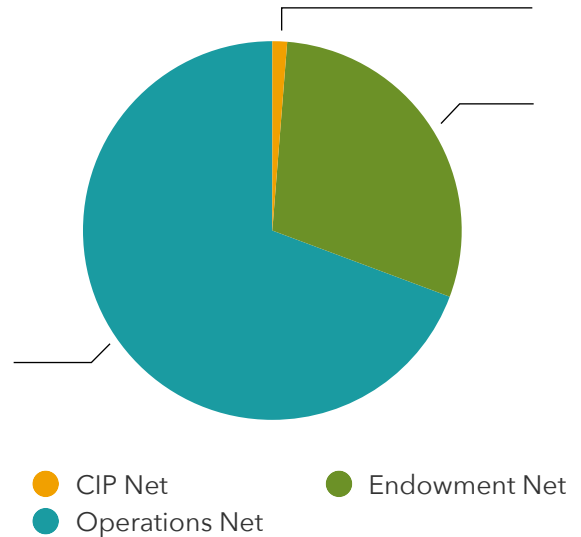
NEP COSTS AND REVENUE TABLE FOR YEARS 2021-2024

Description	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
CIP Net	\$1,538	-\$1,465	-\$4,059
Endowment Net	\$34,348	-\$32,718	-\$90,647
Operations Net	\$80,897	\$109,232	\$102,293
Total	\$116,783	\$75,049	\$7,587

SUMMARY



ACTUAL COSTS



Tangible impact on the community

Beyond the operating expense impact calculated into county's budget, the NEP generates some tangible effects on the community's wellbeing and health, correlated property values, and the educational importance of local ecology and its conservancy. This is what a lot of SB County residents call a quality of life! Similar to the impact of beach parks, or city parks on local quality of life, the hiking trails of the ecological preserve deliver on a perceived value of vibrant and healthy community. The impact is not limited to the immediate neighborhoods but also to local schools and learning communities (Chaffey College, Pomona College, CSUSB) whose students apply theoretical knowledge to practical lessons at the preserve.

Cost-recovery at the NEP

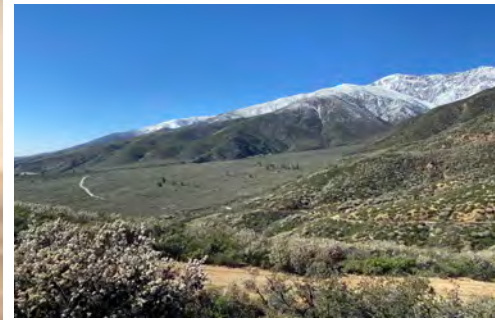
A competition for public funding in the San Bernardino County places public parks at disadvantage. While full funding and staffing is desirable, the cost recovery in form of park fees becomes increasingly the most obvious solution at the NEP. The non-aggressive low parking fee for patrons helps raise much-needed revenue since 2021. This cost-recovery method is quite common in Southern California. During the 2023-2024 period, the operations of the NEP constituted the largest share of costs. Consequently, the management team at the NEP places the parking cost recovery a priority for the preserve's financial well-being.



NEP News: 2023-24



Ron Goodman, a decades-long volunteer and San Bernardino County ranger at NEP was recognized in May for his dedication, work contributions, and stewardship not only at the preserve but also at other special districts sites and parks throughout the county. Ron and SB County employees shared this special moment with awards, small gifts, and stories. Thank you Ron for all your great work!!!



The access to the NEP from the West Loop was evaluated for an installation of the **newest gate** that would be shared by the NEP, UFSF, Water District, and other agencies. The 20-foot gate was installed on the existing pilons in 2024. The gate will minimize the after hours vehicular intrusions and associated poaching of fauna and flora at NEP.

The newest gate was installed in 2024



The new **trash cans** for landfill and recycling have been installed at the NEP parking lot. The three approved sets of cans will aid park rangers with trash control and general cleanliness of the trailhead.



A new park biologist and ranger joined the NEP team early this year. Dr. Tomasz Stanek is a local academic and a volunteer whose interests intersect history with ethnobotany. Welcome to the SB County team!

