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## **FRIENDS OF SANTA CRUZ STATE PARKS ANNOUNCES KEY IMPROVEMENTS TO SANTA CRUZ MISSION STATE HISTORIC PARK**

SAVED FROM CLOSURE, PARK RECEIVES EXHIBIT RENOVATIONS, ADD'L OPERATING HOURS, NEW LOCAL & GRANT FUNDING, OUTDOOR FACILITY UPGRADES AND AVAILABILITY AS A COMMUNITY EVENT VENUE

**FEBRUARY 22, 2013—SANTA CRUZ, CA**—Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends), a non-profit organization dedicated to sustaining the legacy of our local state parks and beaches, today announced a suite of visitor-serving improvements to Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park, which in 2012 was saved by Friends from closure by the state.

Friends' three-year agreement to fund maintenance and operations at the park, as well as continue operation of the [Mission ParkStore](#), also included a commitment to partner with the community and work with California State Parks to make needed improvements. Key improvements include:

- **The opening of new interpretive exhibits**, highlighted with a mural by noted Santa Cruz County artist Ann Thiermann. Also included are upgraded interior lighting and a renovated theater space, featuring a wall projection system for the new short film, "We Are Still Here." The film tells the story of how the abundant lives of Native Indians were changed forever by the California mission system. The budget for the exhibits and renovations was \$160,000, funded through the Prop 84 Bond Act, in-kind contributions and funds provided by Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks.
- **Renovated outdoor cooking facilities**, which feature a "horno" adobe oven that was rebuilt by hand by an expert craftsman.
- **New hours of operation to serve local school children.** The park is now open to the public on Mondays for scheduled school field trips, which are already fully booked through the end of the school year. Funded by Friends, State Parks Interpretive Staff provide programming including "Mission Day" field trips annually for thousands of 3rd and 4th graders, Mission campfires, Junior Rangers and interpretive special events. Students are provided materials and instruction for activities such as crafting adobe bricks, candles and tortillas.
- **Fundraising successes**, including a grant to Friends from the California Missions Foundation and the S.D. Bechtel Foundation totaling \$105,000 (\$35,000/ year for each of the next 3 years); individual community member donations now totaling nearly \$3,000; and sales at the Friends-operated Mission ParkStore are up 42% over the previous year, with proceeds benefiting the park.
- **Availability for community events.** Branded as "Your State Park Downtown," the Mission is home to an exclusive view over Downtown Santa Cruz and much of the city. In 2013, the park will play **host to a series of Music @ the Mission events** (schedule of events to be announced). The venue is available for community use for special events.

“We’re so heartened by the level of interest this community has shown in the Mission in the months since it was saved from closure,” said Bonny Hawley, executive director of Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks. “Thanks to strong community support and dedicated local State Parks staff, we’re polishing this undiscovered gem and can’t wait to show it off for visitors and locals alike in the months ahead.”

### **More About the New Exhibits**

The objective of the project was to extend the Mission's story through exhibits and multi-media by adding the story of the Native Americans of the region before the Mission period. The short film concludes the story with an emphasis on the fact that the Ohlone are still here and an important part of our society.

The project team consisted of more than 20 people including State Parks project directors, State Parks interpreters, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, Ohlone tribe members, interpretive writers, exhibit designers, graphic designers, craftspeople, artists, film producers and local volunteers.

### **About Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park**

The Santa Cruz Mission SHP is home to the oldest building in Santa Cruz County. Built between 1822 and 1824 by local Ohlonean and Yokuts Indians, the park’s signature adobe is the only remaining structure from Mission Santa Cruz, founded in 1791. One of just four adobe buildings left in Santa Cruz County—and sometimes confused with the nearby replica mission chapel—it is the only building of its kind preserved as a museum in the State of California. The adobe served as housing for Neophyte families who lived and worked at the Mission, which operated until 1834 when it was secularized. After decades of private ownership, the adobe was sold to the State of California, extensively restored and finally opened in 1991 to the public as the Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park. In 2012 the park averted closure by the state as a result of a donor agreement entered into with Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks. The park is supported by the Mission Adobe Committee, members of which include representatives of Friends, State Parks and dedicated community volunteers.

### **About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks**

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks was founded in 1976 to support the interpretive programs of coastal state parks in Santa Cruz County. Friends, a non-profit park partner, strives to ensure that the history, traditions and natural beauty of Santa Cruz County State Parks are enjoyed today and by future generations. Friends achieves this by funding educational programs, visitor services and capital projects large and small in our local state parks. Each year more than 327,601 visitors—including thousands of school children—participate in over 4,328 free educational programs funded by Friends.

For more about Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks:

[www.ThatsMyPark.org](http://www.ThatsMyPark.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfSantaCruzStateParks>

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<http://www.youtube.com/user/FriendsSCStateParks>

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