



Mission Programs

Center for Sustainable Destinations

California Launches Coastal Geotourism Initiative

An ambitious project to apply geotourism principles to protect and promote the rugged beauty of California's coast and oceanside communities got underway in twin ceremonies on Aug. 28, 2008, in the towns of Trinidad and Point Arena.

The three-part California Coast Geotourism Initiative will be carried out by a broad coalition of government and private groups in collaboration with the National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations.

The project's lead agency is the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM), overseeing more than 20,000 small islands, rocks, exposed reefs, and pinnacles strung along 1,100 miles of the state's coastline. Totalling about 1,000 acres, these offshore outposts provide sanctuary for many seabirds and marine mammals and offer breathtaking scenic vistas.

Ceremonies marked the start of the Northern California Coast Project, which will involve creation of a regional geotourism stewardship working group to oversee community nominations for a Geotourism MapGuide. Similar projects for the central and southern California coasts are slated to begin early 2009 and the winter of 2010, respectively.

The CCNM is administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in partnership with a group of other federal agencies, state and local governments, tribal organizations, colleges and universities, and non-profit organizations.

Pledge to conserve. In the two ceremonies, the BLM's Rick Hanks, manager of the CCNM, signed amendments with its current partnership agreements pertaining to geotourism principles.

In his remarks, Hanks noted that the geotourism principles in the amendments follow those contained in a memorandum of understanding signed last July by five U.S. federal agencies, which included the BLM, and National Geographic.

In the amendments, BLM and its California partners pledged to support tourism development designed to:

- Maintain the integrity of communities, with improvements intended to reflect and conserve the distinctive character of each area's environment and local heritage.
- Encourage growth in tourism segments most likely to appreciate and respect the unique qualities of the Northern California Coast and its communities.

Communities and businesses supporting the geotourism initiative are expected to work to attract the kind of tourists who recognize the need to protect the character of the coast and limit tourism to levels that do not damage the environment.

Signatories on Aug. 28 included the City of Trinidad, Trinidad Rancheria, Trinidad Museum Society, Tsurai Ancestral Society, and the Yurok Tribe for the CCNM Trinidad Gateway and the City of Point Arena, Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers, and Mendocino Coast Audubon Society for the CCNM Point Arena Gateway. Coastwalk, a CCNM Collaborative Partner, already recognizes geotourism principles.