

Border Field State Park

Opportunities for Improved Engagement through Design Modifications

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for Innovation



Client: California State Parks

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A comprehensive project submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Master of Urban and Regional Planning

Disclaimer: This report was prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master in Urban and Regional Planning degree in the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). It was prepared at the direction of the Department and of California State Parks as a planning client. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department, the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, UCLA as a whole, or the client.

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Executive Summary

The border between the United States (U.S.) and Mexico has a long, complicated history, especially on Monument Mesa, part of Border Field State Park, which abuts the U.S. side of the border. This section of the border is not only known as an area of separation, horrific atrocities, and poverty, but also of carefully-controlled connection, healing, art, and opportunity.

Making changes to Border Field State Park is complicated by overlapping control by U.S. Border Patrol, its history with the Kumeyaay people, its accessibility, its proximity to the largest coastal wetlands in Southern California and the Pacific Ocean, and politics.

Recently, the border has been further separated by a tightly-woven chain link fence and has undergone ever stricter regulations, higher walls, and less time allowed at the point of reconnection at the wall. Through this project, I focus on the systemic and human-created conditions that constrain individual freedoms as well as cross-border community. The goal is to consider the setting not just as a physical space, but also as a place defined in part by inequities.

Research Questions:

1. What are the opportunities and barriers for fostering community engagement and connection to this particular place and all that it signifies in terms of natural, cultural, political, psychological, and historical significance?
2. In regards to the human element of the park:
 - a. What is the current usage of Border Field State Park and what design elements could improve the quality of the experience and the number of users?
 - b. How might engagement be improved through design?

California State Parks hired The Acorn Group to complete a 10-year Interpretive Master Plan for the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. My research is meant to be complementary to The Acorn Group's, which is designing the interpretation elements. My research focuses on the design of space on the U.S. side of Monument Mesa. My project is meant to transcend the boundary metaphorically through design.

Methods included a literature review, mapping the area, direct observation at the park, conducting casual interviews with park users, and conducting formal interviews with representatives of park management agencies.

Interviews revealed that most park visitors are visiting their families through the wall. There are also tourists, those who are interested in the border and Monument, cyclists,

picnickers, and those who want the unique experience of horseback riding on the beach. Large groups gather occasionally for educational events or bi-national church services. Park users are intimidated by the presence of Border Patrol and would appreciate more landscaping, especially if it provides shade. Preserving the history and culture of the Kumeyaay is important to stakeholders. The park is impacted by flooding which occurs every winter, is contaminated, and requires Border Patrol to close the park to vehicle traffic six months of the year. Wayfinding tools are lacking as visitors drive into the park.

To address some of these issues, I recommend California State Parks include the local community in design and nurture of this space; in particular, the Kumeyaay. Strategies to involve the community include:

- When designing, allow this to be a place of healing, consider the five senses, and how to enhance memories and experience.
- Include local artists, through competitions for murals, mosaics, sculpture, and more, with the theme of connection, and a sense of place.
- Include local food vendors on the weekend.
- Provide alternate access modes, including a local shuttle service on the weekends.
- Wayfinding can be added outside of the park through signs and maps.
- Continue excellent online programming options added during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Expand programming and education about the Kumeyaay, Friendship Circle, and the bi-national cultural heritage of the Mesa.
- Cross-cultural and bi-lingual interpretation could also benefit visitors.
- Interpretation on the ecology and geography of this space may also help visitors feel more connected to the natural elements of the park.
- A significant presence of a state park interpreter and/or docent may greatly increase the sense of welcoming and security. An interpreter could also have a significant role in the upkeep and tracking of damage or maintenance issues requiring attention.

Hardscape design recommendations include:

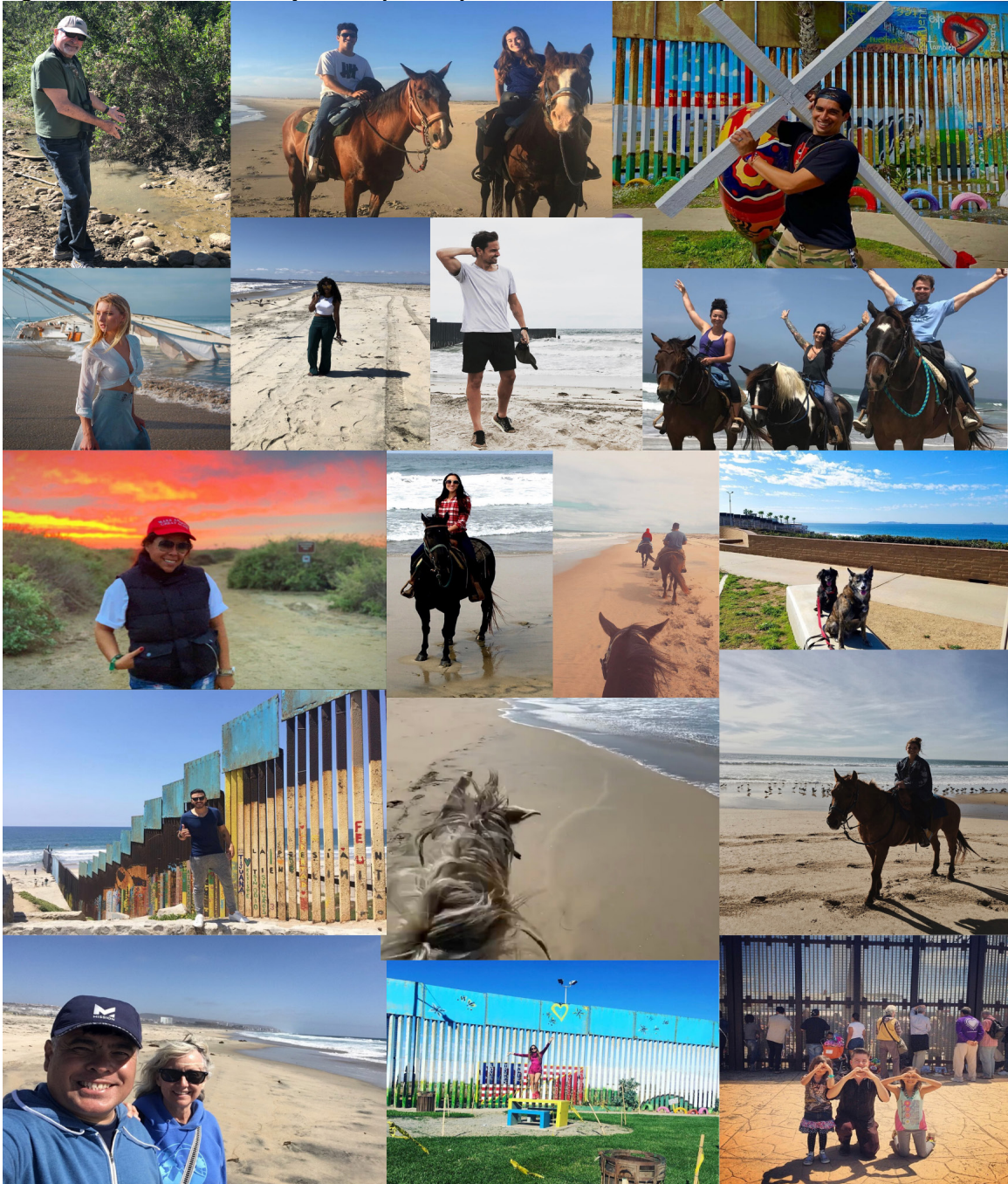
- Providing a sense of arrival and also a sense of place through plantings, trees, or architectural features.
- Adding benches, in addition to picnic tables, would add spots for quiet contemplation or intimate conversation.
- Modify pathways to guide Border Patrol's off-road vehicles to minimize damage to landscaping.

- Install permeable pavement or pavers in the parking lot to allow better absorption of precious rainfall in winter months, provide for cooler surface temperatures, and better soil conditions.
- Add a play structure that is reflective of local culture and history.

My recommended design concepts include art, sensory interpretation, and landscape design within spaces that foster intellectual and emotional connections with the overpowering presence of the wall nearby. By adding informational signs and art, the park can show how we are all connected within one large ecosystem, and yet divided by a wall. Current park improvements focus on identifying history-infused design recommendations to increase community use of the park and to create a place of healing for current cross-border families, friends, and tourists.

Border Field State Park and Monument Mesa at the southwest corner of the park are incredible resources of ecology, cultural, political history, beauty, and most importantly connection. There are many stakeholders invested in the success and care of the park, and through their ideas and best practices from other comparable spaces, this park could provide benefit to many more visitors.

Figure ES: Photo of Selfies (shared publicly; credits in References)



I. Project Overview

Border Field State Park (BFSP) contains a portion of the Tijuana River Estuary, one of the largest remaining coastal wetlands in Southern California. The Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR) has three managing agencies: California State Parks (CSP), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The U.S. southwestern border is at the southern end of BFSP and is heavily monitored by armed Border Patrol (BP) agents in trucks and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

Monument Mesa, my study area (Figure 1), is at the farthest southwest portion of BFSP, and of the U.S., and is a park on the bluff overlooking the estuary to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the west and the border to the south.

Figure 1: Aerial view of Monument Mesa before the secondary wall was built. The Friendship Park circle is still visible on the U.S. side (Photo credit: TRNERR)



Friendship Park,¹ International Friendship Park, or El Parque de la Amistad, (Friendship

¹ *Friendship Park*, or *International Friendship Park*, will be termed *Friendship Circle* for the remainder of this report. While that is not the historical term, nor the term used throughout the literature, such as with

Circle) is monitored by Border Patrol on the U.S. side. It is a circular area on both sides of the border with a historical monument marking the boundary of the two countries in the center of the circle.

Friendship Park is not an open circle; rather it is divided by the fence which marks the closed border. Monument Mesa and Friendship Circle have been a stage for contestation in the past, with peaceful demonstrations and protests by religious leaders and community members. This area has also been the space for cross-border music and yoga, art, communications, and gardening.

The purpose of my project was to investigate barriers and propose solutions to providing a space of healing and connection at this site. I worked in parallel with park specialists, archaeologists, landscape architects, activists, and interpretive planners, who are involved in various projects to improve the space. I evaluated the data in hand, including surveys done by The Acorn Group, data collected from public charrettes, and notes from the archaeology team. I conducted semi-structured interviews with representative staff from associated agencies and then analyzed the results and proposed design and policy solutions.

II. Introduction

Border Field State Park abuts the U.S. side of the border with Mexico. The border is defined by the wall as a barrier and the Border Patrol as the policing agents of that barrier. The park on Monument Mesa (Figure 1) within Border Field State Park is a place of potential reconnection with our neighbors south of the border, as there is a (carefully-controlled) fence at the border, through which people on either side can talk and see each other in a bi-national area called *Friendship Circle* on the U.S. side and *El Parque de la Amistad* (Friendship Park) in Mexico. One of the reasons this place of connection across the border is so significant has to do with accessibility. While it may be fairly easy for most U.S. citizens to travel into Mexico and back without a visa, travel for Mexicans

Friends of Friendship Park, it is the term used by Homeland Security and the term preferred by California State Parks.

into the U.S. is much more arduous and requires proof of substantial income and \$160 for a visa (<https://travel.state.gov/>).

Figure 2: Border Field State Park on Monument Mesa (looking East)



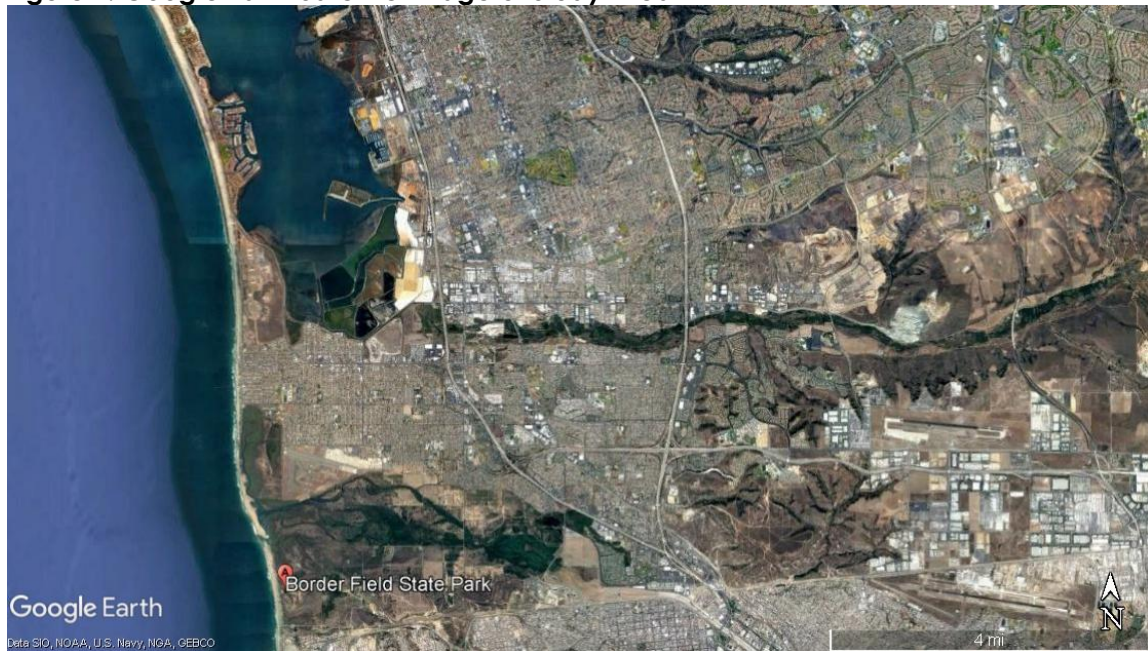
Monument Mesa, within Border Field State Park, contains a neighborhood-like park space (Figure 2) for those on the U.S. side to wait to meet their relatives and friends 'through' the fence, or to rest and spend time with family on the U.S. side. Monument Mesa, managed by California State Parks (client for this project), is located on a bluff, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and adjacent to one of the largest coastal wetlands in Southern California, the Tijuana River Estuary within the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR). (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Tijuana River Estuary from Monument Mesa



The Mesa is the primary geographic boundary (see red marker in Figure 4) for this study. Because of the location of the park, adjacent to the U.S./Mexico border, the wall, the ocean, and the wetlands, it is an important area politically, ecologically, and psychologically and has potential to become even more of a place of healing. The purpose of this project is to investigate barriers and propose solutions to providing that space of healing and connection.

Figure 4: Google Earth Satellite Image of Study Area



III. Background

California State Parks is made up of 280 state parks, 15,000 campsites, 4,500 miles of trails, and has more than 67 million visitors annually (*California State Parks*, n.d.). Their mission is, "To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation."

Border Field State Park is at the southwestern tip of the U.S. which meets the northwestern tip of Mexico. The Pacific Ocean creates its western border. Settling basins and Spooners Mesa form its eastern border. The Tijuana River, Naval Outlying Landing Field, and Imperial Beach are north of the park.

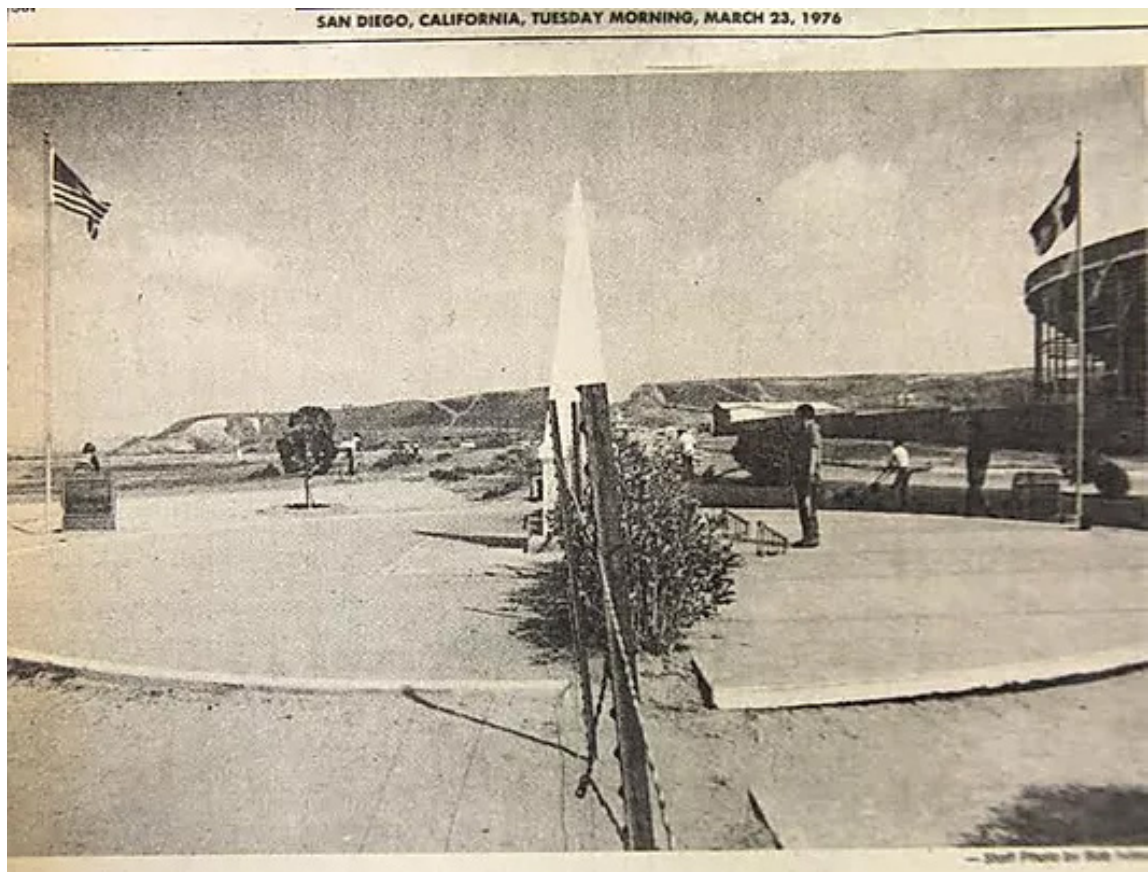
More than ever, the park is important not only from an ecological perspective (see Figure 3) and as a socio-political space, but also as a human space, a space of social distress, joy, and healing, in particular for those who have been separated from families and friends on the other side of the border (initial interview with park staff (Karnik, 2010).

The park is in a beautiful location, in terms of reconnection, ecology, history, and scenery. It is a popular area for walkers, cyclists, equestrians, local residents, and tourists. The Border Field State Park website provides a wealth of information for visitors or those wishing to research the area (*Border Field State Park — Tijuana Estuary: TRNERR*, n.d.). The park is a place to engage, heal, and connect.

This overall area, both north and south of the border, has been inhabited by the Kumeyaay people for 10,000 years (Gamble & Wilken-Robertson, n.d.). This history and connection to those who lived here first must be understood and incorporated in order to set the context for any designs intended to facilitate healing and connection. According to a report by California state archaeologists in 2003, there has been damage done to the 7,000 plus year archaeological site and record in this area by both U.S. and Mexico, by building the wall, and the bull ring (Muranaka & Hernandez, 2003).

Friendship Circle, the cross-border area/park dedicated in 1971 by First Lady Pat Nixon, has a non-profit group, *Friends of Friendship Park*, dedicated to supporting, improving, and promoting the park (Landis, 2018). Within the center of Friendship Park/Friendship Circle is the U.S./Mexico border, and also Monument 258 (Figure 5), originally placed in 1851 to mark the boundary between the two countries (*Monument 258*, n.d.). Sadly, the tree planted by First Lady Pat Nixon when she dedicated the park was removed during construction of the secondary fence in 2009 (Jones, 2019).

Figure 5: Monument 258 in 1976 (Photo archived on Friends of Friendship Park website)



Users of Border Field State Park and Monument Mesa are those visiting their families through the wall, as well as international tourists, especially Germans and English, per former California State Parks (CSP) District Superintendent Clay Phillips , (Karnik, 2010), cyclists, casual and serious equestrians, beach goers, border scholars, and monument baggers (those seeking to set foot on the four corners of the country). Because of its ecological and political location, the space continues to be complex. A bi-national garden planted in 2008 by Friends of Friendship Park was bulldozed on the U.S. side by Border Patrol in January 2020 with no notice (Gomez & Bravo, 2020); it was followed by a public apology by Border Patrol a week later (Spagat, 2020).

My study is not the first to investigate this space in recent years (Holstin, n.d.). In 2008, graduate students from the Department of Communication at University of California, San Diego produced a documentary about Border Field State Park, called *A Divided*

Friendship, The Destruction of Border Field State Park and hosted a website about their work (Artenstein, 2008). The space has been, and continues to be, contested and negotiated many times over ("Trial Begins for Faith Leaders Arrested During Border Protest," 2019).

The park is in a challenging location, as the cross-border reconnection space, separated by a tightly-woven chain link fence, is heavily monitored by Border Patrol. The space has undergone ever tightening regulations, higher walls, and less time allowed at the point of reconnection at the wall. The entire border between the U.S. and Mexico has become more heavily guarded by the Border Patrol, especially since 9/11. In addition, militia-type volunteers have eagerly taken up the task of guarding and patrolling the border without any official authority. President Trump promised in his campaign that he would build a new wall and that he would make Mexico pay for it (*The Many Ways Trump Has Said Mexico Will Pay for the Wall - The New York Times*, 2019). After portions of the wall were rebuilt, he held a press opportunity and gave remarks at the Otay Mesa Border Wall Site (port of entry in San Diego) and had an exchange with reporters there ("Remarks at the Otay Mesa Border Wall Site and an Exchange With Reporters in San Diego, California," 2019).

To understand the psychological and political condition in present day at the U.S. Mexico border, it is important to understand that horrific atrocities have occurred at the border and to those crossing and seeking asylum, including one of the darkest moments of U.S. history where children have been, and continue to be, separated from their parents and held in deplorable conditions (*What We Know*, 2018). The Trump administration considers the increase in asylum seekers to be a threat to national security (*U.S. Detention of Child Migrants*, 2020).

"The priority mission of the Border Patrol is preventing terrorists and terrorists weapons, including weapons of mass destruction, from entering the United States. Undaunted by scorching desert heat or freezing northern winters, they work tirelessly as vigilant protectors of our Nation's borders.

While the Border Patrol has changed dramatically since its inception in 1924, its primary mission remains unchanged: to detect and prevent the illegal entry of aliens into the United States. Together with other law enforcement officers, the Border Patrol helps maintain borders that work - facilitating the flow of legal immigration and goods while preventing the illegal trafficking of people and contraband." - Mission of Customs and Border Patrol (*Border Patrol Overview | U.S. Customs and Border Protection*, n.d.)

A librarian at San Diego State University is collecting letters from detainees in hopes of retaining this collective memory for the sake of not only shining a light on the conditions now, but also preserving history ("Letters from immigration detention centers, 'break my heart every time I open an envelope,' volunteers say," 2019; *Pro-Immigrant Demonstrators Protest Outside Otay Mesa Detention Center*, 2019).


California State Parks hired The Acorn Group to complete a 10-year Interpretive Master Plan for TRNERR, the massive wetland tri-managed by California State Parks, the County of San Diego, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, with additional involvement by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). My project will work in parallel with The Acorn Group's work, and the two projects are expected to be complementary. While The Acorn Group is designing the interpretation elements, my project focuses on the design of space, on the U.S. side of Monument Mesa in particular.

My study began in early fall of 2019 and by time it was completed, the Covid-19 pandemic, quarantine, and economic shutdown were in full effect. Border Field State Park shifted to online educational and engagement opportunities during this time. *Virtual Field Trips* have been expanded and improved upon, including the *Salt Marsh Secrets* elementary program to replace *Tijuana Estuary Explorers* salt marsh activity. During the first live session, 167 participants logged on which is also posted via the State Parks' website (*PORTS*, n.d.). The June 2020 *Speaker Series* is planned as virtual only and the educational team is doing *Home Learning Programs* via webinar for up to 500 people at a time. *Lunchtime Live* is now held every Tuesday at noon on Facebook and docents post there and on Instagram. At home learning materials are also posted for

students on the TRNERR webpage (<https://trnerr.org/digital-resources-for-at-home-learning/>).

Community charrettes (open public meetings to collect community feedback) were completed by California State Parks in spring of 2017. I analyzed the feedback from the meeting and used it as the partial basis for semi-structured interview questions with local agency representatives working for the benefit of the park. This study also incorporates information and ideas from a report prepared by archaeologist Dennis Gallegos in 2019 which annotates notes from two previous planning meetings in 2017. The report includes informal Kumeyaay and Kumeyaay Diegueno Land Conservancy consultations on their history in the area with ideas for improving the connections to the land and its history.

More than half a century ago, Ian McHarg (1969) in his book, *Design with Nature*, prompted architects, landscape architects, and planners to examine the multifaceted socio-political-psychological-ecological layers of sites. I tell part of the story in this research project, using these same layering techniques as McHarg's to demonstrate my area of study. The way that McHarg emphasizes the garden and plants as crucial elements of a space for the human spirit resonates with me, and I realized from the moment I started working on this project how multifaceted and complex it is, both from human and ecological perspectives.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) Protected Areas Database of the U.S. (PAD-US) is the official inventory of parks and other protected areas for geospatial analysis, and is useful in conservation, recreation, public health, or land management research (*Protected Areas | USGS.Gov*, n.d.), applicable to my study. The Trust for Public Land provides a wide assortment of resources and information regarding parks (*The Trust for Public Land*, n.d.). Protected Lands provides information about the PAD-US vision, its uses, inventory completeness, and the network of data-stewards (*Protected Lands*, n.d.). Environmental Systems Research Institute collaborated with USGS to develop additional features (ArcGIS, 2020). The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has GIS map layers with a diverse set of data for the San Diego area (*SANDAG  GIS Downloads:: San Diego's Regional Planning Agency*, n.d.). These sources provided much of the data for my GIS maps (Results section).

The ecology of the Tijuana Estuary is described in great detail in a book funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Zedler & Nordby, 1986). While *The Ecology of Tijuana Estuary, California: a profile*, was published over 30 years ago, the basic ecology of the estuary remains the same. Issues of sewage and agricultural waste had much worse impacts then, and issues of excessive sedimentation due to overbuilding of hillsides within the watershed, both in the U.S. and Mexico were already being reported at that time. There is hope though that the contamination issue may be resolved in part through a \$300 million project inclusion in the new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which replaces the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and is set to go into effect July, 2020 (Malone, n.d.).

The border itself causes myriad environmental problems affecting wildlife and humans. The Sierra Club has a coalition, called Borderlands, which advocates for viable solutions to complex border problems. Border Patrol agents, who suffer the effects of pollution directly when they pursue a suspect moving through the water, are often the first to notice environmental problems. While actively monitoring for illegal crossings they notice health hazards in the river (Graham, 2017).

There are several non-profit organizations involved in and around the border and the park. Oscar Romo leads a non-profit in Tijuana called Alter Terra to bring awareness to issues about the border (*Alter Terra - Building Partnerships for Conservation*, 2020). Alter Terra is a bi-national conservation project of Earth Island Institute (*Earth Island Institute*, n.d.). Rene Peralta is an architect based in Tijuana who does extensive cross-border work. He works to increase art and cultural resources around the border (Falke, 2016).

This particular area gets local, national, and international attention because of the border, wall, Monument, and the estuary. Joe Nevins' *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond* starts there, talking about First Lady Pat Nixon's visit to what was then Friendship Park (Nevins, 2010). In 2011, a group of participants in a Political Equator Meeting (PE3), or *Nomadic Urban Action and Debate*, led by Teddy Cruz (Mathur & da Cunha, 2014), engaged in a public action/artistic performance of crossing into Mexico from the U.S. by way of a large storm drain in Smuggler's Gulch (*Los Laureles Canyon in Mexico*) at

the border. This drain was built by the U.S. to allow for a surveillance highway to be built along the border, crossing Smuggler's Gulch.

For PE3, Mexican officials set up a temporary customs table to officially admit the participants and stamp their passports. This participatory research event was layered onto Teddy Cruz's research on *The Political Equator* and highlighted the flow of people into the U.S., industrial waste into Mexico, and wastewater into the U.S. and into the estuary. PE3 revealed how the post-9/11 surveillance infrastructure had further eroded the cross-border community connections as well as the ecological and fluvial geomorphology processes not meant to be intersected by a political border. He and Fonna Forman, of *Estudio Teddy Cruz + Forman*, explore these conflicts across *The Political Equator* as a way to contextualize global issues of citizenship, especially along the equator. Their graphic design work elucidating these concepts are exhibited at numerous art museums and exhibits both in the U.S. and globally (*Spatializing Citizenship*, 2016). Anuradha Mathur, Professor of Design from University of Pennsylvania, also did similar work with Cruz and Forman, holding a design studio in the Spring of 2017 to test the assumptions around the border issues (A. Mathur, personal communication, March 30, 2020).

Supported by the San Diego Foundation, Border Field State Park worked with *4Walls International* and local community activists to recycle trash found in the estuary and deposited by Tijuana River flows. Artisans used tires, plastic, and glass to make eco-bricks and create an amphitheater. The San Diego Foundation also funded Border Field State Park's work with local high school students who were part of a non-profit program called *A Reason to Survive (ARTS)*, to add art to a not-very-welcoming chain-link fence surrounding some infrastructure at the entrance to the park (The San Diego Foundation, 2015).

IV. Key Constructs

Community engagement refers to both:

- 1) local community members (see Map 1-6) involved in the project, from design inception, to thought process and feedback of any changes to the park
- 2) community members increasing their use of and involvement with the park

Connection refers to community members feeling attached to the park and its surroundings

The significance of the park is described and defined in many ways:

Natural - one of the biggest coastal wetlands in Southern California; *natural* means not constructed by people

Cultural - the human history of this area goes back 10,000 years and has evolved to what it is today, and encompasses a diverse group of people

Political - this is the space of a border between Mexico and the U.S.

Psychological - the impact that the space has on one's mental and emotional state; physical borders patrolled by armed men/women can intimidate, while this place of beauty can inspire or induce melancholy

Historical - the overall cultural, political, and natural history of the area

Quality of the experience - the feeling conveyed to the users by the physical design of the park and the nature surrounding it

Engagement through design - the relationship that park users can feel through its design; this may involve connections to the land, history, and nature through interpretive signage, hardscape, plantings, and placemaking

V. Stakeholders

There are many stakeholders in the Tijuana River Watershed. Numerous federal, regional, and local government agencies, political systems, organizations, as well as numerous formal and informal activist groups and individuals are working to improve the ecology and/or psychosocial context of this area. To demonstrate the complex organizational layers in the area, TRNERR, one of the major organizing structures, has three managing agencies (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services, and California State Parks), two cooperating agencies (Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association and Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges), plus the following U.S. collaborators:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. California Native Plant Society,
San Diego Chapter | 11. San Diego Museum Council |
| 2. I Love a Clean San Diego | 12. San Diego State University Field
Stations |
| 3. Mar Vista High School Poseidon
Academy | 13. San Diego Surfrider Foundation |
| 4. Ocean Conservancy | 14. Southwest Center for
Environmental Research and
Policy |
| 5. Paradise Creek Educational
Parks, Inc. | 15. State Water Resources Control
Board |
| 6. Restore America's Estuaries | 16. Tijuana River Valley Recovery
Team |
| 7. SANDAG – Committee on
Binational Regional
Opportunities | 17. Tijuana River Action Network |
| 8. San Diego Audubon Society | 18. U.S. Geological Survey – Western
Ecological Research Center |
| 9. San Diego Coastkeeper | |
| 10. San Diego Coastal Storms | |

VI. Literature Review

Healing Spaces

Besides the pure aesthetic, recreational, and ecological benefits, the psychosocial benefits of parks and specific park design and design elements have been researched in depth, with over 20,000 studies on the health benefits of nature (Bowler et al., 2010; Carpenter, 2013; Greenhalgh et al., 1995). Bowler et al (2010) conducted a systematic review of 25 studies which included measurements of health or well-being when exposed to natural or synthetic environments. Most of these studies were controlled, as opposed to observational studies, where the exposure was to a natural or synthetic environment during a walk or run. The most common measures in these studies were self-reported emotions, and their findings suggested a positive outcome from exposure to the natural environment. While these studies are critical to understanding *health* benefits of nature, they do not necessarily address the *healing* aspects of nature, or of choreographed healing spaces.

Nature Sacred is a non-profit “Driven by research, informed by design and rooted in over two decades’ experience working with over 130 communities from all over the country” which has created a formula for integrating sacred places into built green environments to “foster mindful reflection, respite and renewal” (*Nature Sacred*, n.d.). Their guiding principles to create sacred spaces, include being: 1) Physically open and accessible to all; 2) Designed for respite, reflection, and creating peace; 3) Located close to the neighborhood it serves; and 4) Led and designed by and for the community it serves, including their story and culture.

Hallmarks of their sacred spaces formula include: a bench for pausing, a journal and pen at each bench for visitors to share their thoughts, a *Firesoul* (someone who is passionate about the space and its healing capacity), and a sense of place (artifacts, design, and art that share the story and cultivate a sense of pride). Design elements in their formula include: 1) a portal - something to mark the transition into this sacred

space, including archways, gates, stands of trees, or other markers; 2) a path - whether straight or curving, to guide the way and to provide a "sense of safety in time and space"; 3) a destination - a point where the path leads, indicating a journey or discovery; and 4) a sense of surround - space enclosures to provide a sense of boundary and safety, and can include shrubs, trees, fences, gardens, sculpture, or other element (*Nature Sacred*, n.d.). One example of a garden designed with this formula is the Western Correctional Institution in Cumberland, Maryland. The warden wanted a place for prisoners to be able to meditate, work outside in nature, and gain new skills.

Eckerling (1996) defined healing gardens which are designed to make people feel better, and discussed how the five senses could be addressed in design. Ulrich (Cooper Marcus et al., 1999) said that in a healing garden, the effects should be felt by the majority of garden users. Marcus and Sachs (2013) provide a guide for developing restorative outdoor spaces in their book, *Therapeutic Landscapes*. While the focus is on design for hospitals and other patient care areas, it does provide a useful framework for design and evaluation, including a participatory process and also planting and maintenance procedures to be incorporated into the planning of these spaces, which could be useful to the study area. Ecotherapy is described as the healing power of natural ecosystems which benefit people (Summers & Vivian, 2018). Summers and Vivian point out that many people see these spaces as "free" but that in fact they can be seen as an important resource that public funds should help protect, both for the ecosystem, as well as human health. "Nature is there. Nature is free," is a study which evaluated urban greenspace impacts on immigrant families. Hordyk et al. (2015) emphasize that nature is often the connection immigrants relate to 'back home' and that the access to nature and related sensory stimuli (sights, sounds, smells) that can remind them of home can be beneficial and should be included in the Social Determinants of Health, as used by the World Health Organization.

Healing gardens have also been incorporated into college campuses as planners are realizing the mental health benefits can combat stresses (Lau & Yang, 2009). Park design can also be a way of providing a healing space related to traumatic events in

history. These designed spaces are some of the most common healing parks, and include war memorials (National Park Service, n.d.), terrorism attacks, and most recently, sites of healing related to sexual violence (Auslander & Thomashow, 2019) and the atrocities of slavery (Halifax, 2018). The National Memorial for Peace and Justice is a space dedicated to sharing the story of many untold lynchings of Black people. One of their objectives is to inspire truth-telling about racial injustices that have occurred in our lifespans and in recent history (*The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, n.d.). In their manuscript, "Heritage that Hurts," Uzzell and Balentyne (1998) describe *hot interpretation*, coined by Uzzell in 1989, as a way to move beyond the cognitive and objective style of interpretation and infuse interpretation with emotion, especially in areas that are connected to or were the space for painful histories. It is important when creating a healing space to realize the history of that place. One way to do that is to include those who hold the history of that space as partners in the design process for the landscape and interpretation of ecology and cultural history, and also in the ongoing use and nurturing of the space. These partnerships may ensure that a slippage of these historical connections does not occur. In conjunction with these partners, park managers should consider returning a portion of the park to the conditions they were in before the park was established (Ruppert, 2003). Wolfley (2016) advocates that parks prioritize tribal interests in access to land where "time-honored traditions and practices are celebrated and life is renewed".

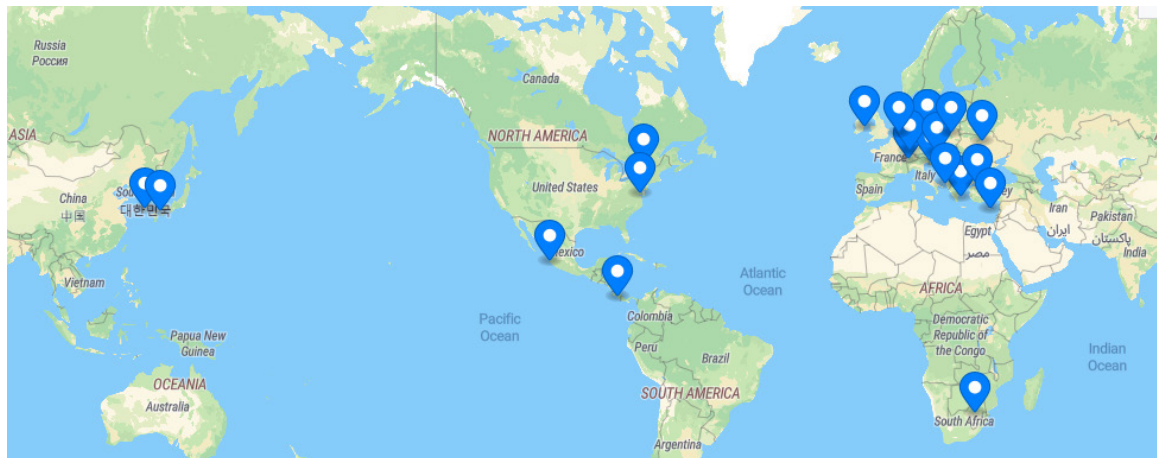
In 1999, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience was formed, and now consists of 275 members in over 60 countries. They provide grants, training, and networking, to promote and support sites of conscience, places with historical wounds, to ensure that this history is not erased, and instead is remembered. These sites are designed to help visitors make connections to current human rights issues (*Sites of Conscience*, n.d.). Knapp and Forist (2014) have been promoting the use of the term *dialogic interpretation* which takes interpretation from telling a story about a place to bringing in the story of the visitor, so that the visitor can better incorporate what they have learned. This type of interpretation may work well when designing interpretation for healing spaces with a broad and diverse visitor base.

Peace Parks

According to the Center on Biological Diversity, a "Park for Peace" is a special designation for transboundary conservation areas which are dedicated to the promotion, celebration, and/or commemoration of peace and cooperation across nations (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2017). This description is based on the special designation of *Park for Peace* from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature World Commission on Protected Areas, which is made up of 250 transboundary conservation experts from around the world (*Transboundary Conservation*, 2016).

"With the ultimate goal to foster world peace, the International Peace Garden Foundation advances global friendship through the creation of Peace Gardens," is the mission of the International Peace Garden Foundation, started in 1991, and has offices in Canada, the U.S., and France. Annual awards (Figure 6) are given to gardens in line with their mission. Their latest award for an international peace garden went to Suncheon Bay National Garden, South Korea, which was inaugurated on October 31st, 2018 (*International Peace | International Peace Garden Foundation | Batavia, n.d.*).

Figure 6: Map of International Peace Garden Winners, 2020, <https://www.ipgf.org/>



Dalian World Peace Park in China and the International Peace Garden on the border between the U.S. and Canada (Figures 7 & 8) are two examples described by Wang and Burley (2009). These parks are in remote areas, like Border Field State Park, and

experience challenges in visitation. Only the International Peace Garden is transboundary, of the two. Both parks express peace through written word and conceptual design. For example, Dalian World Peace Park is in the shape of a semicircle, representing Earth. The International Peace Garden is designed directly over the U.S./Canada border with a circle in the middle. A 9/11 memorial was added and includes steel beams from one of the World Trade Towers ("Dedication Cairn," n.d.).

Figure 7: International Peace Garden Entrance (Photo credit: International Peace Garden)



Friendship Circle having the highest levels of control there now, more than ever (Rael, 2017). People are no longer able to touch through the fence, much less reach their arms through, exchange photos or documents. Visits are only allowed when supervised by a Border Patrol agent. She says, "Friendship Park has completely lost its original function."

International Borders

There is a growing cadre of experts and academics studying the borders between countries, but Johnson and Jones argue that the plethora of border studies may be obscuring what a border actually is. They suggest that an interdisciplinary approach can succeed by focusing on place (where the borders are), performance (how the borders are enacted), and perspective (who is doing the bordering - the state, media, computer programmers, and they add politics (the often complicated relationship between power and space) (Johnson et al., 2011).

I attended an event in November 2019, where Zocalo Public Square hosted a panel of experts and journalists to discuss the U.S./Mexico border. They had all grown up or lived along the border and discussed life not as living at the edge, but as living in the center of it all. They talked about the border as a wonderful bi-national, bi-lingual, bi-cultural area which is not full of violence and disharmony as is so frequently portrayed in the media. They did discuss an increased "thickening" of the border though, which includes more walls and more enforcement around the border than before (Romero, 2019).

Goettlich (2018) argues that enforced *linearization* of borders is a relatively new phenomena, since approximately 1900, and that this process focuses more intently on the divisibility of spaces, over the territoriality of spaces, and leads to an involvement of 'different actors.' Goettlich focuses on the specification of the exact line that demarcates the political boundary and how that has changed from a *frontier zone*.

International Borders: Walls

Walls are a way of permanently/semi-permanently marking linear territorial boundaries. The fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized freedom to many, and a winding down of archaic

political practices which separated communities and culture. The terrorist attacks against the U.S. in 2001 stimulated a resurgence of border fences and border walls. "Walls have become a normalized response to insecurity" (Vallet, 2019).

The Annenberg Space for Photography showcased an exhibit on walls (October 5 - December 29, 2019) (Smithson, 2019). One of the exhibit descriptors pointed out that when the Berlin Wall fell there were 15 international walls in the world - now there are 77! Reece Jones, Professor of Geography and the Environment at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, contends that borders produce violence, and that they not only create but also enforce economic disparities. In his book, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*, Jones contends that border walls have increased under the auspices of 9/11 concerns but in reality are because of countries' desire to protect their wealth and cultures (Jones, 2016). He talks about the global crisis for refugees, with borders and walls impeding movement and ultimately leading to countless deaths. In *Open Borders: In Defense of Free Movement*, he discusses how disturbing it is to see the normalization of borders and walls, even though there is nothing natural about them (Jones, 2019).

In his 2017 *Borderwall as Architecture: A manifesto for the U.S.-Mexico boundary*, Ronald Rael vividly depicts the border wall as a painful absurdity that many must deal with. He reimagines the "borderwall" as both "serious and humorous" and does so from an architect's perspective. The entire volume is a trove of inventive items to reconstruct the border wall that divides the "states of North America." These inventions include using the wall as the center for teeter totters, to contain water collection pipes for desert communities, or a place to host a cross-national library (Rael, 2017). He also documents the multitude of ways people have creatively transcended, scaled, or flown over the wall, metaphorically, literally, and artistically. Rael contends that if there are to be walls, we might as well make good use of them. Additional ideas include solar panel walls to generate electricity, bike/pedestrian paths covering the tops of border walls, or cactus walls adding to the local ecosystem instead of completely impeding it.

Cruz and Forman, based in San Diego, talk about visualizing a new public, where we "rethink citizenship beyond the nation state and its obsession with division" and instead

consider “cross-border citizenship” (“Teddy Cruz and Fonna Forman Call for ‘A New Public Imagination,’” 2017). They ask their audience to consider “dignity, mutual recognition, and regional interdependence,” providing for equity of all persons, and creation of public spaces that educate. They also point out that borders cannot contain everything - while they might stand as a blockade, they cannot stop ecological flows such as water, air, or human expression, including culture and ethics. They advise that the audience let the wall be the ugly thing that it is and resist the wall not with beautification of the wall but with creativity around it, and that if enough of those listening to the message do this, we may change the fear that produced the wall in the first place.

International Borders: Nature

Historical political boundaries often came from the natural border created by a mountain, canyon, or river. Even though borders may have once been drawn along the lines of geomorphology, nature is now often ignored in the construction of physical borders to mark political lines. As this is being written, the Trump Administration has pushed for the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico to be built faster and has obtained an exemption from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency laws (*Amid U.S. Lockdowns, The Border Wall Construction Goes On*, n.d.). These laws are meant to protect nature by requiring careful examination of local ecology and call for remediation and mitigation of environmental impacts of constructed projects. Physical political borders often defy nature and local ecologies in favor of the control and power that these borders provide.

International Borders: Art

The border has inspired much art, both at its location and elsewhere. Some of this art is quite public while other art has been in smaller local exhibits. Following are just a few examples. In the bay area of Northern California, the Richmond Art Center held an exhibit for community youth who created a mural which examined questions about what borders and walls mean in our lives and what it means to move freely (“Keep Families Together Mural,” n.d.). “At the Edges” is a blog highlighting art by local artists about the border, the wall, and the relationships between San Diego and Tijuana

(Hoslin, n.d.). Borders themselves are also used as canvases for art, often unauthorized, about the impact of borders (Madsen, 2015).

Artist, JR, posted a larger-than-life black and white photo of a toddler looking over the wall. In an interview, he talks about the art installation as something that brought people together. He then created an accompanying installation where he created, with numerous community members from both countries, a large set of eyes looking up from a white table, with the eyes on either side of the border. "Where for a moment we don't see the wall." "I'm trying to prove to myself that the limits are not where I think they are, and by doing that I hope it does the same thing to other people" (*Artist JR Turned the Mexican Border into an Art Installation*, n.d.). The work done by Cruz and Forman in rethinking the concept of citizenship as it relates to the border is also artistic expression, and they have shown their art in exhibits around the world (Cruz & Forman, 2020; Mathur & da Cunha, 2014).

VII. Project Goals for Border Field State Park's Monument Mesa

My project focuses on identifying history-infused design recommendations to increase community use of the Border Field State Park and improve amenities to create a place of healing for current cross-border families, friends, and local and international tourists. The goal of park improvements is to consider the setting not just as a physical space, but also as a place defined, in part, by inequities.

Consequently, my research addresses social justice issues. It focuses on the systemic, and human-created conditions that constrain individual freedoms (Figure 10) as well as cross-border community collaboration. This project is not meant to bring down the wall, but rather, transcend the boundary metaphorically through design. Proposed design concepts include art, sensory interpretation, and landscape design within spaces that foster intellectual and emotional connections, with the overpowering presence of the wall.

VIII. Research Questions

My project was driven by the following research questions:

- What are the opportunities and barriers for fostering community engagement and connection to this particular place and all that it signifies in terms of natural, cultural, political, psychological, and historical significance?
 - What is the current usage of Border Field State Park and what design elements could improve the quality of the experience and the number of users?
 - How might engagement be improved through design?

Figure 9: The lighthouse behind the Monument, wall, and barbed wire



IX. Research Tasks

Project objectives include summarizing and synthesizing new and previously collected data in order to propose design interventions that would make the park more welcoming for users (Figure 9). Possible design interventions include art installations,

landscaping, hardscaping, tree canopy expansion, signage, as well as digital and internet-based video, audio, or visual materials. I have completed a literature review investigating similar public spaces and best practice recommendations for cross-border parks. My literature review also includes the benefits of nature, design of healing spaces, and incorporation of art as a means of community expression, cultural identity and ownership, and place-making. I also interviewed and documented best management practices from experts on international borders, border walls, and public spaces, especially peace parks. An image search for selfies and photos taken at Border Field State Park was reviewed for topics and insight into user preferences and highlights.

Figure 10: Friendship Park Panoramic (Photo Credit: FriendshipPark.org)



X. Data and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to evaluate perceptions and opinions about Monument Mesa in Border Field State Park in order to propose design interventions that could make the park more welcoming and more of a healing place. I visited the park on multiple occasions, including several times before the winter rains came and the roads were closed. Visits at the park were used to conduct direct observations and engage in casual conversations with park users and staff from Border Patrol and California State Parks. One of my park visits, after a background check, included an official tour of the border by a Border Patrol agent (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Photo taken on Border Patrol Tour, between the primary and secondary walls, near the historic bunkers. Monument Mesa is on the right, Tijuana straight ahead and Coronado Islands off the coast.



I developed my questionnaire after visiting the site, talking to representatives of some of the key agencies, and after doing some background research on the park. I also evaluated results from a visitor survey conducted in the fall of 2019 by The Acorn Group (TAG), a consultant for California State Parks. In the fall of 2019, TAG, conducted

interviews of key stakeholders in preparation for their interpretive master plan. Interviewees included representatives from the Kumeyaay Tribes, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California State Parks, Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. I also utilized meeting notes from previous public charrettes with local residents held by the Southern Service Center of California State Parks. (See Questionnaire for this project in the Appendix.) Before finalizing my questionnaire, I evaluated the TAG questionnaire (The Acorn Group, 2020) to ensure that the questions were not duplicative.

This study involved pursuing human subjects review approval. The UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP) determined that this study, IRB#19-002090 (PI: Sand; Sponsor: Loukaitou-Sideris), met the criteria for an exemption from IRB review.

Demographic Data Mapping

Since one of the goals for the park is to increase its usage by local community members, I gathered geographic information systems (GIS) data about the community in the immediate vicinity of the park. I mapped several variables about the community to better understand their needs for access to public space as well as their resources, or lack thereof, which may facilitate or hinder park visitation. Specific data included income level, transportation mode, and bike path accessibility.

The variables I ultimately mapped were poverty (Figure 12), alternate commuters (Figure 13) and households without cars (Figure 14). I selected these variables as I wanted to understand the individual resources local households have, including income, and type of commute. I mapped alternate commuters (those who commute to work through a mode other than driving alone), because adults in a home who do not have access to a car will presumably have challenges getting to the park, which is four miles in from the main road. Alternate commuter designation is an imperfect substitute for not having access to a car for each person over 16. I also mapped households without a car.

I wanted to understand community resources, including open space, park trails, bike routes, and dedicated bike lanes. I chose open space (Figure 15) so that I could map parks by type. Figure 16 shows the trails throughout the estuary (TRVEA, 2017). I mapped bike routes (Figure 17) to see the full network of bike routes in the study area. I then selected just the bike routes (Figure 18) with dedicated bike lanes and the multi-use path (walkers/bikers). I excluded the bike routes, which only include signage about bikes with no bike lanes, and I also excluded the freeway shoulder bike routes, both of which are not likely to be family/kid-friendly/safe bike paths. I mapped a buffer around the family-/ kid-friendly paths to show coverage and continuity, especially in regard to neighborhood connection to Border Field State Park.

Direct Observation

I gathered new data through direct observations of the public at the park. The observations included counts of users, as well as noting gender and approximate age. In particular, I documented counts and approximate age of children, disabled persons and elderly. I also recorded types of activities users engaged in, whether passive or active and also what the general movement pattern is in the park. In order to conduct direct observation, I found a spot at the edge of the park where I could sit unobtrusively. While maintaining a good view of the park and the entrance into Friendship Circle through the Border Patrol concrete barricades. I also photo-documented the park and surrounding environs. I noted the look, feel, smells and sounds of the park and documented with notes and photographs any obvious design concerns.

I greeted and had some informal conversations with park users, letting them know that I was a student and explained my research. I did not actively pursue conversations, but if they happened naturally, I noted them in my findings.

If I took any pictures that included park users, I ensured that individuals were not identifiable. Faces, body markings such as tattoos, or distinguishing clothing or characteristics of individuals which would allow people to be identified were excluded.

License plates on the cars in the parking lot were also excluded. I was especially careful because this is an area immediately next to Homeland Security property and one that is actively monitored by Border Patrol. There already is concern expressed by park stakeholders especially, most notably for undocumented individuals.

Interviews

In order to have the broadest possible understanding of perceptions about, and ideas for, the park, I included a broad range of Border Field State Park stakeholder agencies, both internal and external, from which to select staff representatives to interview. These agencies (description in Appendix) included:

1. California State Parks
2. Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association
3. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol
4. TRNERR Trails Committee
5. Friends of Friendship Park
6. The Acorn Group
7. Landscape design firm proposing ideas for Monument Mesa

I also met with individuals from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

My plan was to interview at least one individual from each agency listed above, for a total of 10 total interviewees. I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven people from seven agencies to allow for open-ended descriptions of concerns about the park design as well as ideas for improvement. During the semi-structured interviews, I asked for the interviewees' thoughts and opinions about the park and its uses and purposes, as well as ideas about Border Field State Park and especially Monument Mesa, with a focus on perceived barriers and ideas for improvement.

Interviews were conducted in person or via video conference (Zoom). After ensuring permission by interviewees, I audio-recorded each interview for transcription purposes. The audio files were later digitally transcribed,² and then an undergraduate student researcher assisted with reviewing and editing the transcriptions for accuracy to prepare for thematic analysis. The transcription files were then read for topics by both the researcher and the undergraduate student researcher. Once topics were identified they were catalogued and quantified across all interviews. Topics were noted as unique if they were only seen in the transcripts of one interviewee, or overlapping, if similar topics were encountered across multiple interviews. I looked for topics that were common among interviews and also for those that were missing.

I then summarized the results and compiled them with the findings from the secondary data analysis and direct observations. Finally, I provided critical assessment of all results and used this assessment to propose design modification options for the park at Monument Mesa.

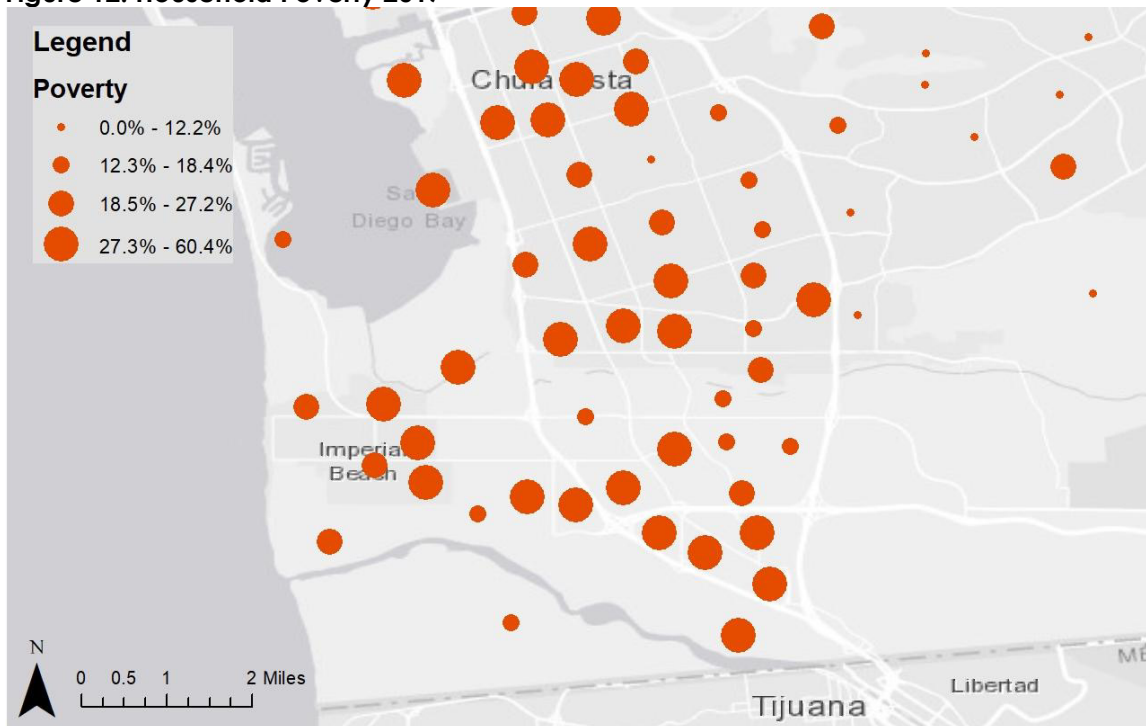
² I used Rev to transcribe my interviews. Then we did the detailed coding of each interview and entered the results in a google sheets file. We created broader topics together and then I verified, did some cleaning, and summarized the data and used google sheets to make the graphs. I then completed more in-depth content/meaning analysis by summarizing, highlighting important concepts, and comparing the answers to my questions.

XI. Results

Demographics

The Acorn Group survey revealed that only 54% of the visitors at Monument Mesa lived locally (The Acorn Group, 2020). Many of the other visitors were first-time visitors and lived in other cities, states or even countries. In order to understand the local community, I evaluated a number of sociodemographic variables for the surrounding census tracts through GIS mapping. I did not include those who live in Mexico, as the primary Border Field State Park users were presumed to be U.S. residents or tourists.³

Figure 12: Household Poverty 2017



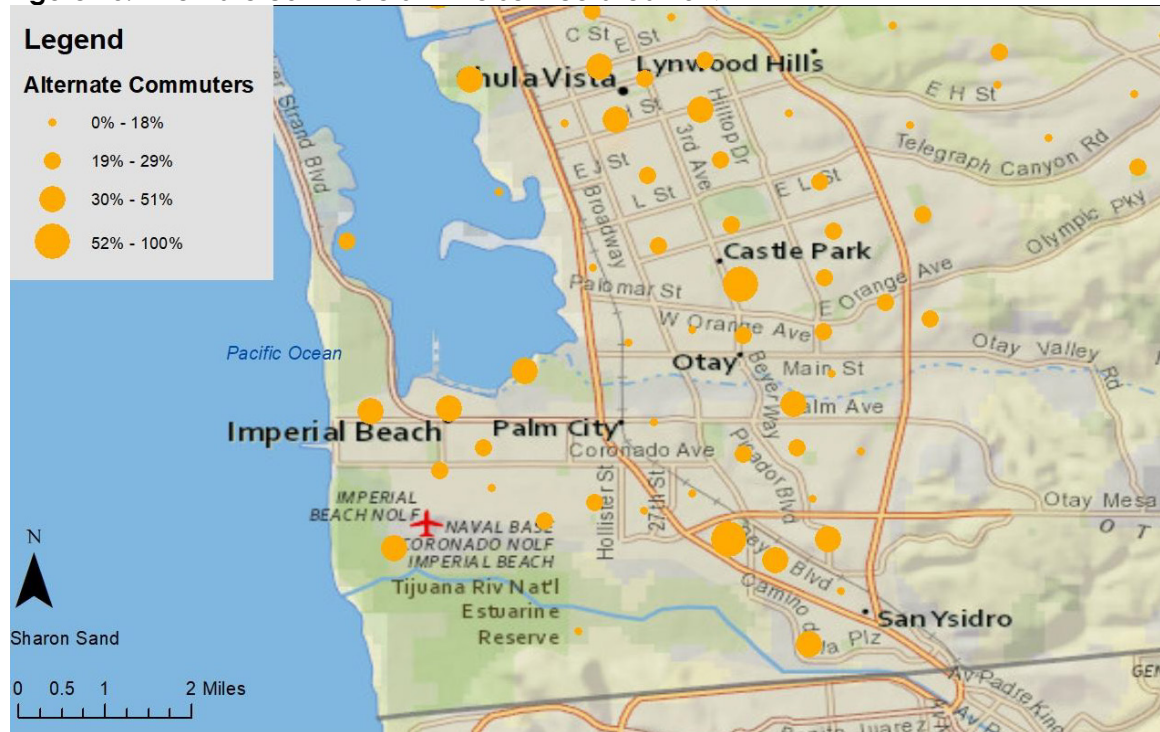
Source: ACS Household Income data 2017; Esri, HERE, Garmin © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community
Scale 1:100,000

The area closest to Monument Mesa, which is at the Southwestern most tip of the United States, appears overall to be at the highest level below the poverty line, based on the

³ The park does not provide access to cross the border, and the nearest crossing is in San Ysidro, approximately four miles inland.

map above. The neighborhoods a little farther north and farther east appear to have a pattern of less poverty.

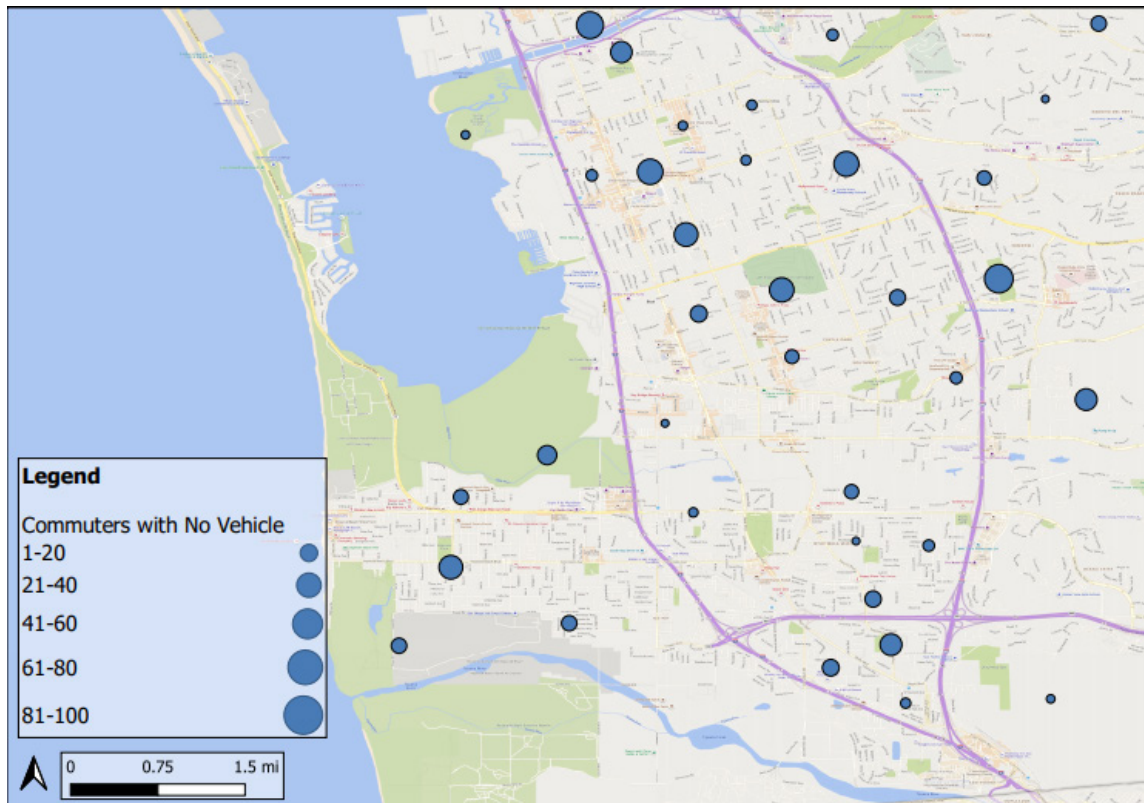
Figure 13: Alternate commuters in the service area 2017



Alternate commuters are those who use alternate transport modes to get to work: includes carpool, public transportation, biking and walking. Percentages classified by natural breaks. Source: Esri, National Geographic basemap, American Community Survey 2017, Census 2010. Scale 1:100,000.

In order to understand modes of transport, I combined all commuters who did not drive alone to work, as a proxy for car ownership. I am assuming that the majority of the alternate commuters do not have a car for each adult household member. This is an important variable to understand since an objective of my capstone research project is to better serve the local community. If a significant number of the local community do not have access to a car, even if there is a car in the household, we must consider other modes of transportation to Border Field State Park. The highest level of alternate commuters roughly lines up with the areas of highest poverty, leading me to conclude that the proxy of commuter mode for car ownership is most likely appropriate in this study area.

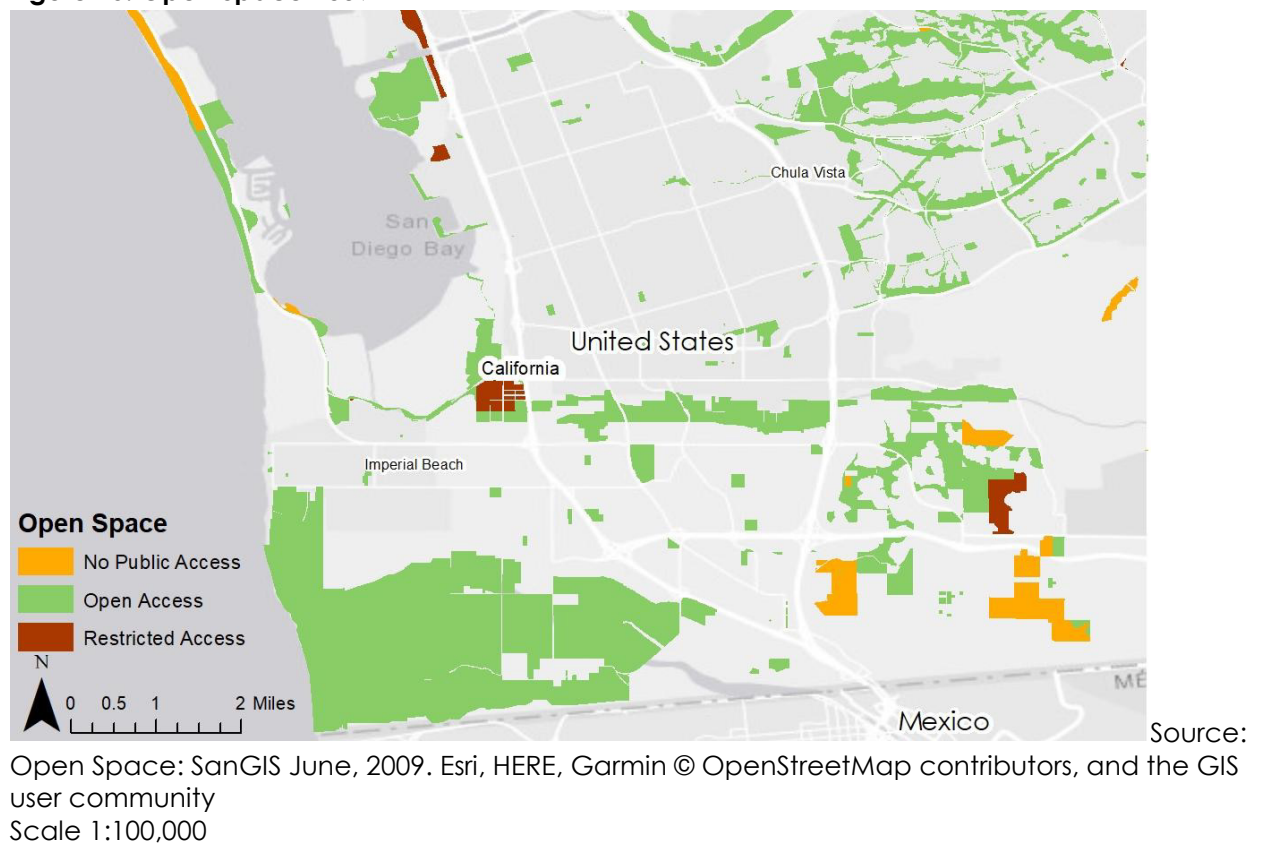
Figure 14: Means of Transportation to Work by Vehicles Available



Describes workers 16 and over in households with no vehicle to drive to work alone

Map Sources: Tiger/Shapefile, US Census Data/American Community Survey 2017 (*Census*), Bing Basemap; Metadata Description: Estimate Total Car, truck, or van - drove alone:No vehicle available (Column B08141_007E); Scale 1:40,000 (Map made with the assistance of Bailey Ward, UCLA Geography/Environmental Studies)

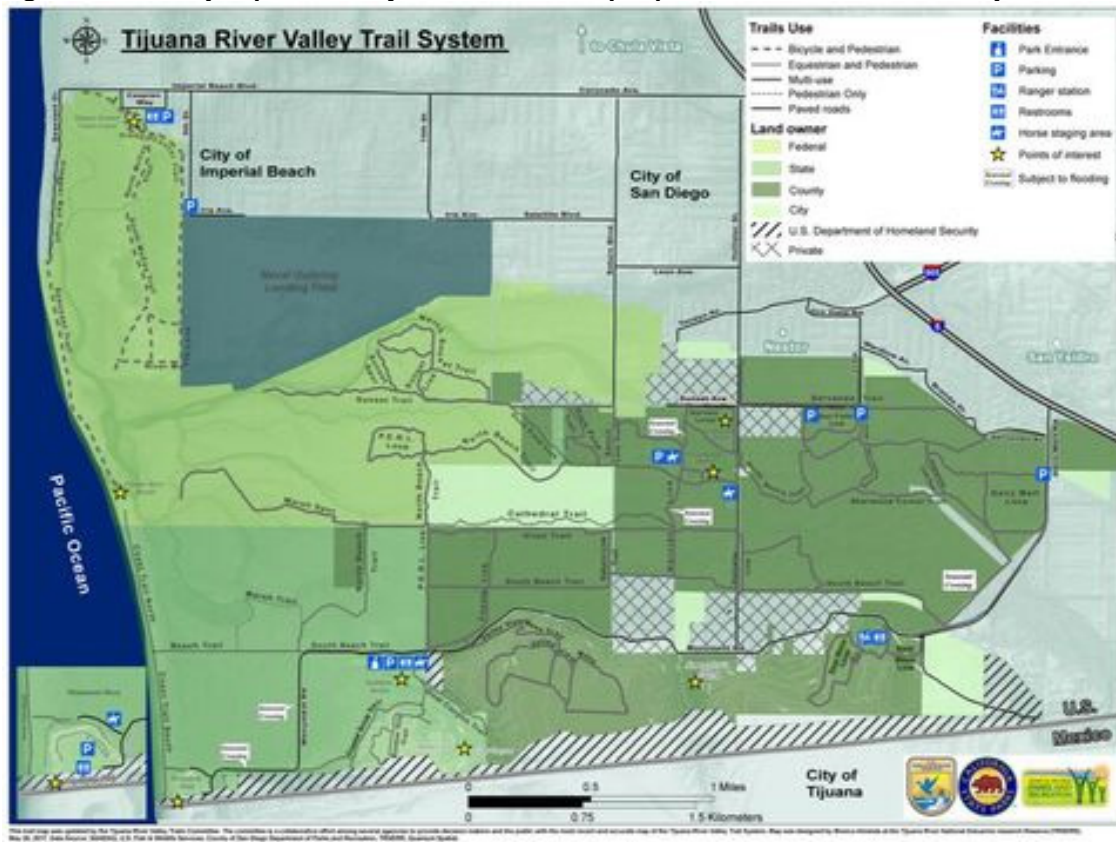
Figure 15: Open Space 2009



An evaluation of the open space in the study area helps to situate the Border Field State Park and the needs of the community it serves. Through this map we can analyze whether other parks are clustered or spread out and also where there might be contiguous wildlife corridors. There is a considerable amount of open space in the study area, but the Reserve and Regional Park make up the majority of it. There are other parks in clusters, and a few small parks in large sections without any other park. The majority of the spaces are considered *open access*,⁴ like Border Field State Park, with two fairly small separate protected open spaces with restricted access, and about six protected open spaces with no public access.

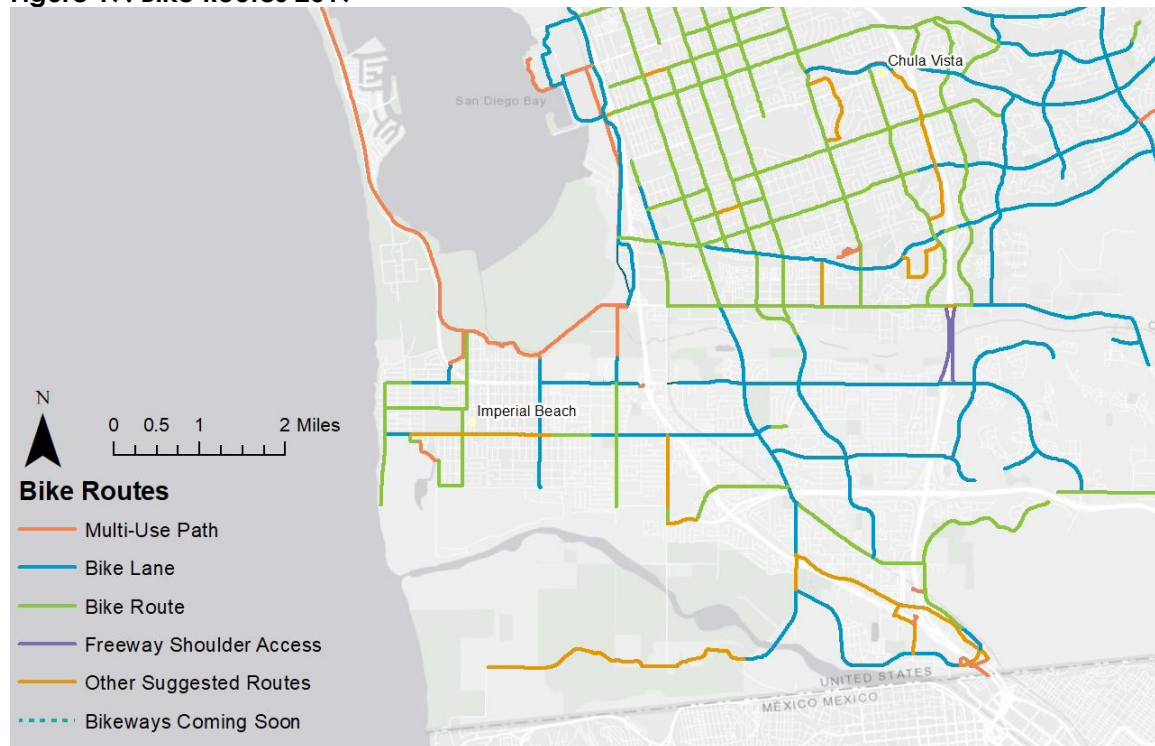
⁴ Open access per these GIS maps refers to the fact that the public is allowed. This term does not clarify how often or how long the public can access these spaces.

Figure 16: Trails (Map Credit: Tijuana River Valley Equestrian Association, 2017)



This trail map, found on the Equestrian Association's website, shows the expansive network of trails and differentiates the trail access type (bicycle, equestrian, pedestrian only or mixed). It also shows the different land holders of the estuary, which includes: federal, state, county and city. Finally, it marks facilities, including restrooms, and has a blow-up of Monument Mesa in the bottom left.

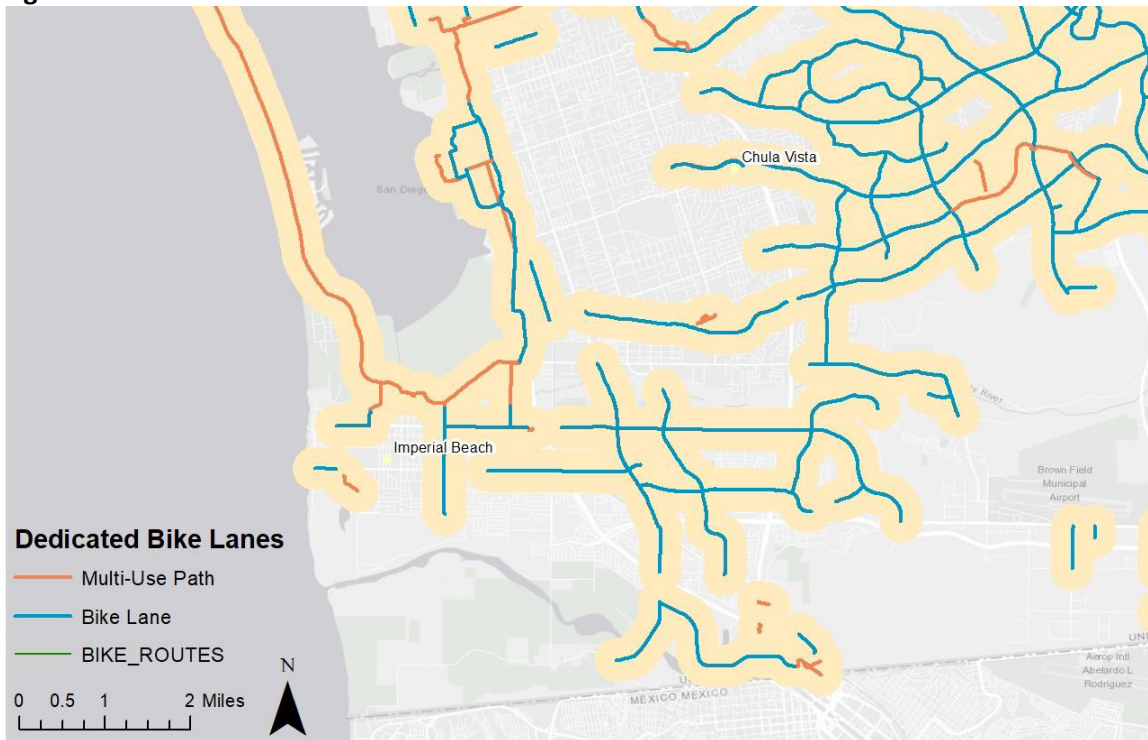
Figure 17: Bike Routes 2019



Source: Bike Route Data: SanGIS August, 2019; Esri, HERE, Garmin © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community
Scale 1:100,000

There seems to be a fairly robust bike route network in the study area, and I was especially pleased to see the orange bike path on the lower left almost reaching Monument Mesa within Border Field State Park. On the base map one, can see a faint white line. This indicates a dirt road on which a bicyclist with trail tires could continue to the beach, or to Monument Mesa (confirmed by private sector interviewee).

Figure 18: Dedicated Bike Lanes with ¼ Mile Buffer



Source: Bike Route Data: SanGIS August, 2019; Esri, HERE, Garmin © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community
Scale 1:100,000

In order to understand accessibility to the park, especially for families with children, I evaluated the dedicated bike paths, leaving out those which were just designated by signs. I then added a ¼ mile buffer around each of the family-friendly paths in order to visualize the bike network, and presumed ease of access for families within each neighborhood. There are quite a few paths but unfortunately there are quite a few breaks in the paths, possibly indicating precarious biking areas. Additionally, there does not appear to be a solid network of bike paths leading all the way to Border Field State Park.

Direct Observation

Figure 19: Photo documentation of Monument Mesa



A. Lawn on the mesa



B. Border wall into the Pacific



C. Remnants of Friendship Circle



D. Interpretive signage



E. Picnic tables around lawn with trees, and border wall in the distance



F. Beach below Monument Mesa



G. Border extending into the Pacific Ocean



H. Park with stadium beyond the border



I. Native and invasive plants



J. Adobe brick planter remains



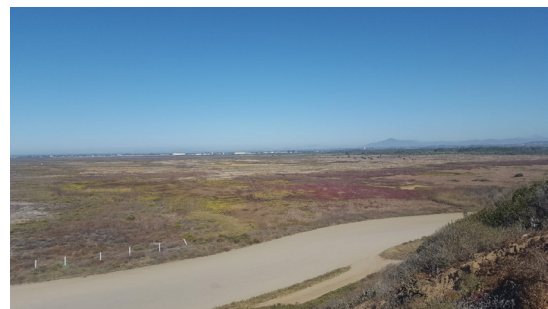
K. View of the estuary from the mesa



L. Interpretive signage in view of estuary



M. Broken adobe brick planters



N. Estuary from the mesa



O. Native plants with the only park trees



P. View from Mesa to Secondary and Primary Fences



Q. Dilapidated picnic tables in native plant area



R. Restrooms on the Mesa

I visited the site multiple times (Figure 19) from the fall of 2019 through the spring of 2020. As I expected, there were quite a few couples, young children, and elders going to visit family or friends on the other side of the wall.

While walking around the mesa, I met a high school student and her dad. They were visiting from their home nearby so she could take pictures for her essay on immigration. I also met a bicyclist who was just finishing her solo bike ride all the way from Vancouver, Canada. A man who had met her there was recollecting how he used to be able to walk across the border with just a driver's license to see the bull fights. I talked with several Border Patrol agents who were under the shade of the only trees at the park (Figure 19O), and they told me how the water pollution levels were just as high as they were before the water treatment facility was put in, most likely due to more runoff from the canyons west of the treatment plant.

In terms of the environment, I noticed there were beautiful dragonflies buzzing around, numerous shorebirds probing the sand, and groups of equestrians riding along the

beach. The waves were beautiful and the temperature was around 70 degrees on most visits. I could see the San Diego coastline and Point Loma to the north. Down at the beach, a metal fence with rolled barbed wire on top of it stretched parallel to the border fence, preventing anyone on the U.S. side from approaching the border fence.

Looking at the border, from the Mesa, I was reminded of a prison camp. Multiple fences stood tall. Armed agents near large SUVs stood ready to take off at a moment's notice. Looking for the monument was challenging□what I first saw from afar was the lighthouse, which towers above the monument, obscured by the fence. Temporary concrete barriers (K-rails) were set up in front of the fence, and the Border Patrol agents stood between the K-rails and the access area for Friendship Circle and the Monument. After being let into Friendship Circle after checking in with the agent, I crossed the



distance from the secondary to the primary fence, which is a metal link fence so tightly woven that I could barely see the people on the other side. I met a man who was on the other side of the fence who said he comes there every week to meet people visiting from other countries and practice speaking different languages with them.

This scene stood in deep contrast to the scene on the Mexican side. It was dominated by lively beach goers,

umbrellas, food vendors and music. One Border Patrol agent said, "This is the business side, that is the party side." On the Mexican side there were also apartment buildings facing the beach, up on the mesa, with a painted mural and a Mexican flag hanging from a balcony. The park on the bluff had a lovely winding path down to the sand,

lined with palm trees. There were quite a few people on the Mexican side walking right up to wall, which we cannot approach on the U.S. side.⁵

On the mesa, there were 18 picnic tables (Figure 19E) around the lawn. Ten of the tables were in a semi-circular group picnic area and two large tables without benches might be used to serve food in the center of that. The other picnic tables were dispersed around the large lawn area. There were also 10 barbecues an overabundance of trash sets (two square and one round for trash and recycling), placed next to almost every picnic table.



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On my most recent visit on February 25, 2020, the area was lush and green from recent rains and also quiet,⁶ as the road to the California State Park was closed. During this visit, even traffic was not allowed past the California State Park entrance. During this same visit I had an official Border Patrol tour which included a two-hour tour of the park by vehicle to areas only accessible by Border Patrol, including areas which were previously trails before the installation of the double fence.



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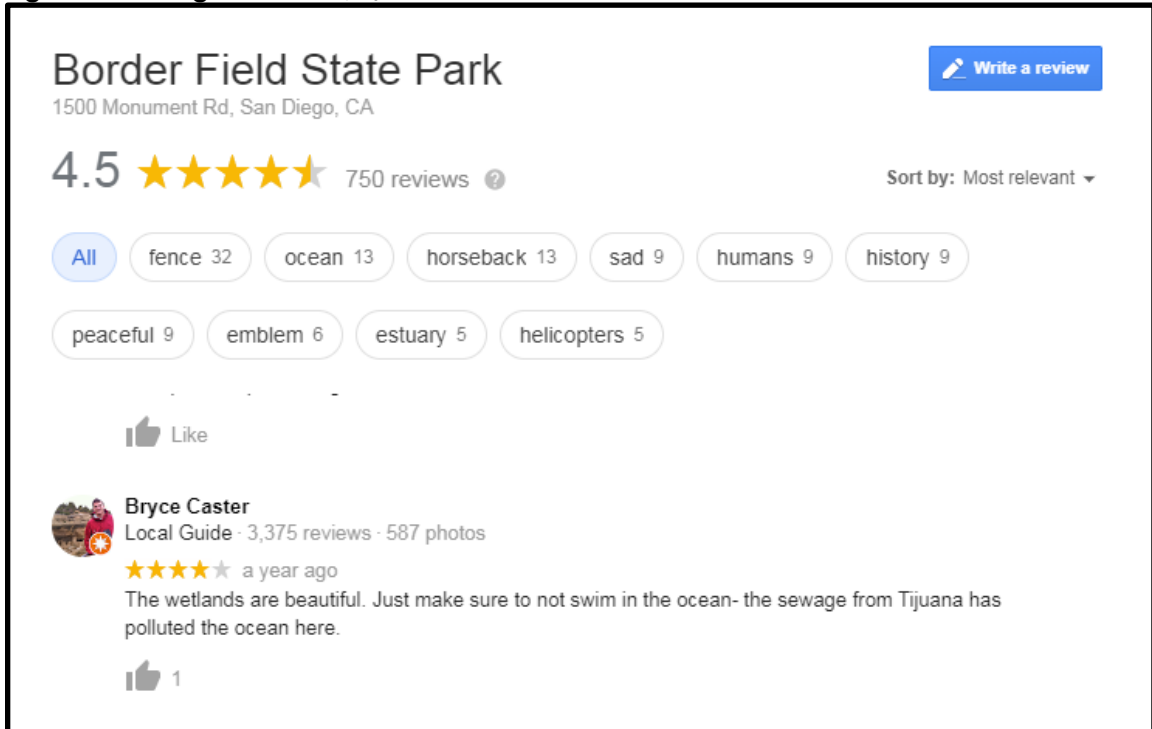
⁵ Painting I did with the dichotomy of the border and the spaces they divide in mind

⁶ This short video clip (20 seconds) captures the quiet, the birds chirping and singing, and the helicopters from the nearby naval base whirring in and out ([02/25/20 video](#)).

Secondary Data Analysis

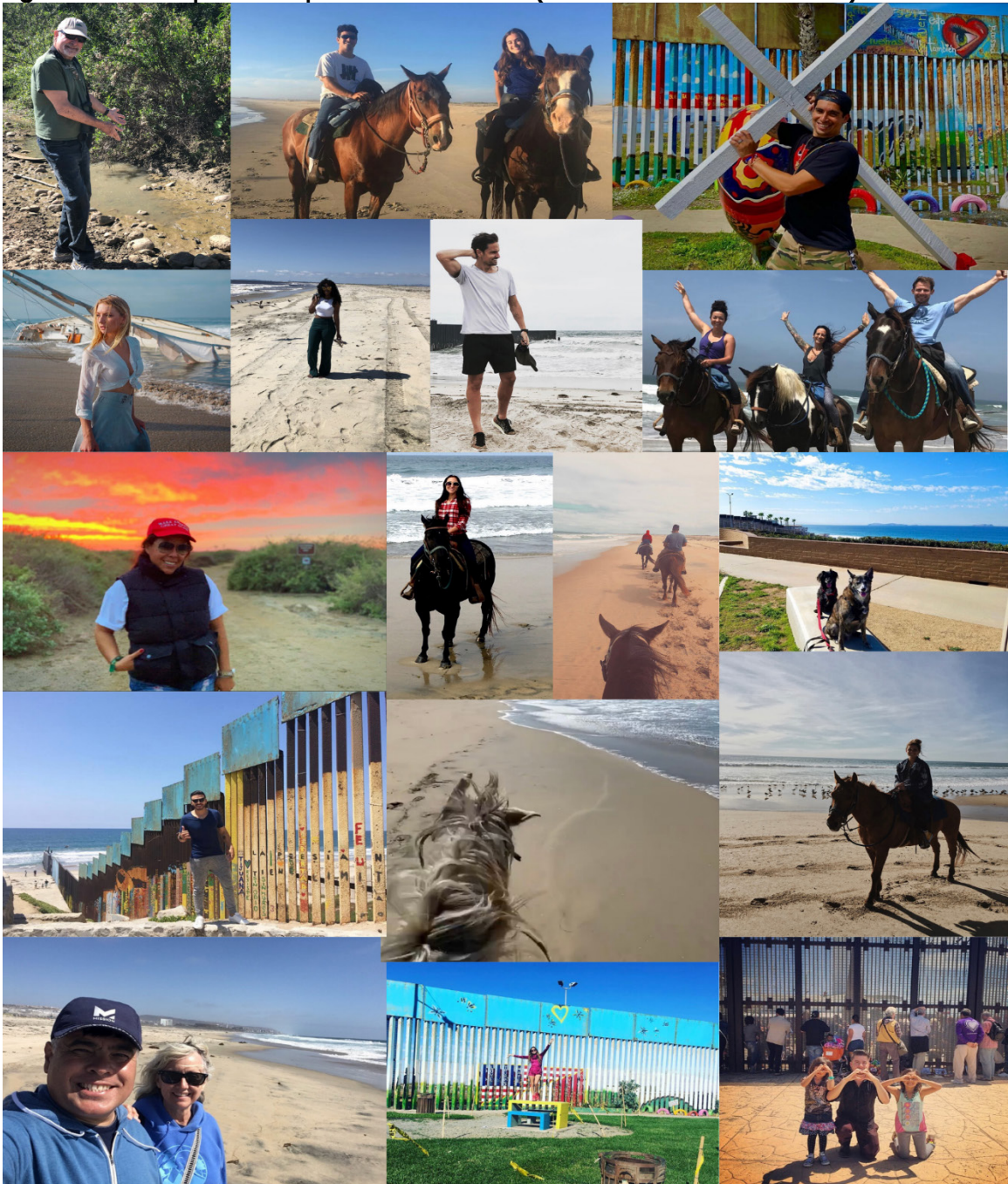
A quick Google review (Figure 20) search reveals the top keywords: Fence, Ocean, Horseback, Sad, Humans, and History.

Figure 20: Google Reviews, 3/2020



Public selfies (Figure 21) were found on multiple social media platforms and websites by searching through Instagram geo-tag and Yelp reviews for "Border Field State Park," and Twitter and Facebook for keywords 'Border Field State Park' and 'Monument Mesa.'

Figure 21: Selfies posted to public social media (Photo credits in References)



On Instagram, most pictures included beach scenery, and most of these pictures involved riding horses. Three Instagram pictures show people on the brightly painted Mexico side of the border. Two pictures included the United States side of the border, one of which showed the border stretching to the beach with a border patrol vehicle

nearby. Although not permitted in the park, one user showed their dogs on a BFSP pathway.

From Twitter, I gathered an image taking place on a park trail which included a political caption, "Today at Border Field State Park taunting liberal media on the other side of the border!" Another Twitter image was taken in front of some trees and water in the estuary. A Facebook image shows a visitor in front of the Mexican side of the border wall. From Yelp, we have two beach pictures, two pictures of visitors in front of the park entrance sign, and one picture showing the United States side of the border with informational signage.

Overall, most selfie pictures taken at the park were on the beach. Equestrian activities made up a large amount of the images on social media. The border wall was also significant as a setting for pictures. Political messages often followed in the captions of many images posted on social media.

XII. Interviews

I interviewed representatives from internal and external stakeholder groups including public and private agencies invested in the Tijuana Estuary. I used prepared questions (See Appendix) and added clarifying questions when appropriate.⁷ I asked interviewees to focus their answers as much as possible on Monument Mesa, but in some cases the issues discussed involved the whole Border Field State Park, or access into Monument Mesa.

Interviewees had been working in some capacity with or around Border Field State Park an average of 8.4 years, with a range of 1-18 years.

Initial Thematic Coding

Initial review of the interview data revealed overlapping topics, including: limited access because of the road, the border fence and Border Patrol, and seeing the place as an important and special connection space for families.⁸

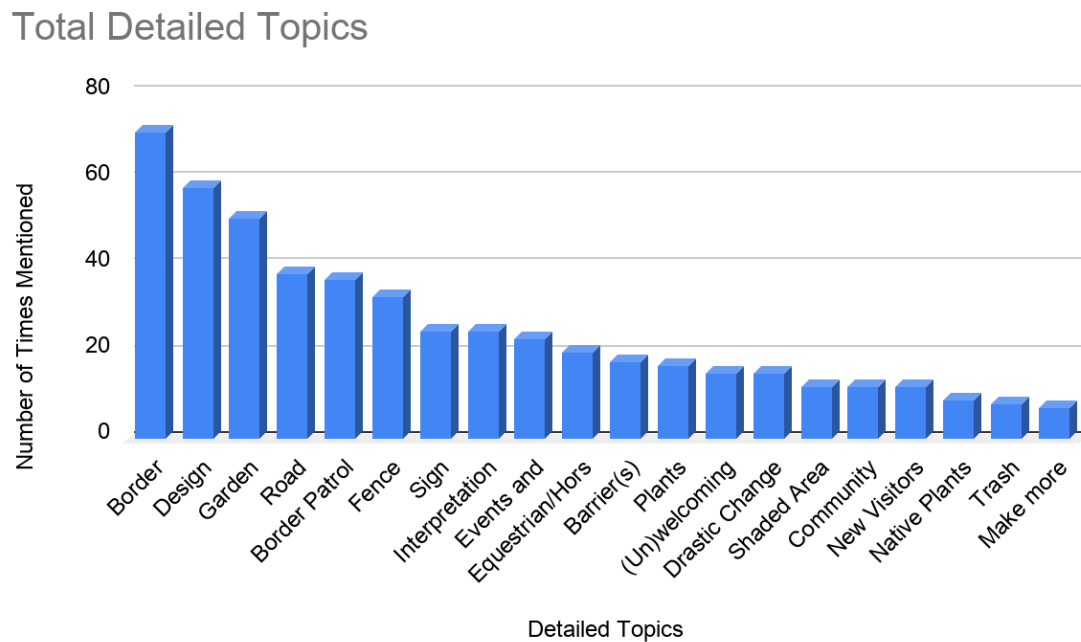
A word cloud analyzer (wordcloud.com) was used with the interviewee response text (see Figure 22). This initial analysis reveals an importance of people in relation to the park, and also time and space as two critical variables.

⁷ Most interviewees allowed me to record the interviews. For the one interview when the interviewee did not allow me to record the interview, I took careful notes. The audio files were digitally transcribed, and then an undergraduate student researcher assisted with reviewing and editing the transcriptions for accuracy. The transcription files were then read for topics by both the researcher and the undergraduate student researcher.

⁸ Once topics were identified they were catalogued and quantified across all interviews. Topics were noted as unique if they were only seen in the transcripts of one interviewee, or overlapping if the topics were seen across interviews.

factors that impact the park but are not under California State Parks' control: Border, Border Patrol, and Road.

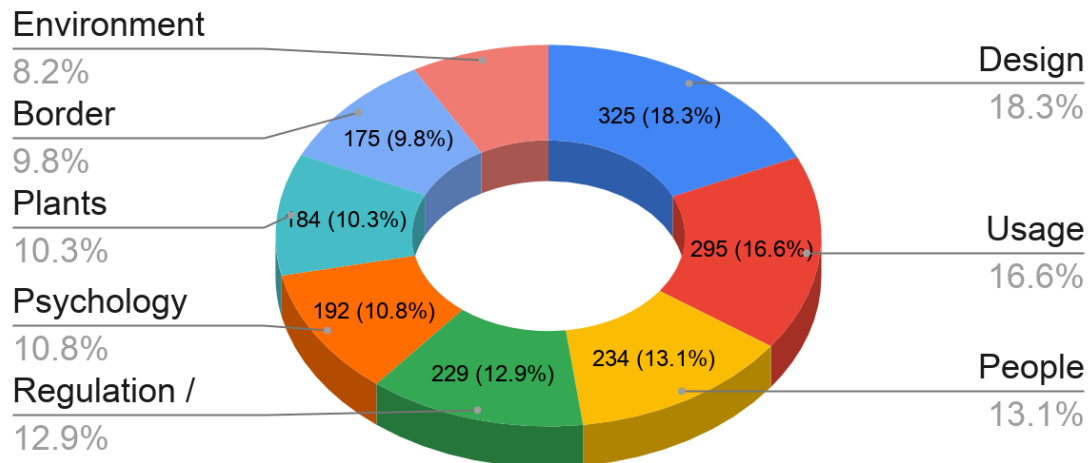
Figure 23: Total Detailed Topics



Broader topics were analyzed (Figure 24) and show a wide variety of topics, ranging from *border*, *design*, *events*, *native plants* to *trash*. This analysis is not surprising given that the space is quite multi-faceted and complicated by binational infrastructure and socio-political issues.

Figure 24: Broad Topic Analysis

Broader Topics



When counting topics that were mentioned by all interviewees, *border*, *Border Patrol*, *design*, *fence*, and *road* were mentioned by all interviewees. The next most common topics, mentioned by almost all interviewees, were *drastic change*, *shaded area*, *signage*, and *(un)welcoming*.

In-Depth Examination of Topics

In-depth thematic examination included question-by-question extraction of all interviewees' responses, highlighting deeper and broader concepts and feedback, summarizing the concepts and responses and providing direct quotes. The topics and concepts were kept as original as possible, without verification of facts, and with all analysis, summary and interpretation by the author saved for the discussion section.

It is clear from my interviews that many people, including those I interviewed, feel deeply attached to Border Field State Park, TRNERR, Monument Mesa, and Friendship Park/Friendship Circle. Interviewees passionately expressed their desire to protect, improve upon and share this physical space, and the associated knowledge and history, with others.

Visitors/Park Users

"I'd say the highest percentage of people are families that are, you know, wanting to get out there to see their family members on the Mexican side." (Private sector interviewee)

All interviewees agreed: many different people arrive with different motivations for visiting. Many of the park users are there to visit family and friends on the other side of the border. There are also quite a number of visitors who want to see the Monument, Friendship Circle, and the border wall. Visitors include small children, elderly people, people with different abilities, and young couples. People come from the local area, across the United States, and all over the world to this park.

The park is in a very unique position in the United States; it is geographically unique as one of the four corners of the U.S. Curiosity seekers and those seeking to set foot on all four corners, want the experience of being at the Southwest corner of the United States.

Horseback riding on the beach is a unique opportunity, and there were a lot of horseback riders, some who go up to Monument Mesa, but do not necessarily go to the binational area. The local ranchers ride their horses there. There are ecotourists and a good amount of bird watchers (birders), including some from Canada, who sometimes visit the binational area. There are also hikers, who like to trek out to the beach. Border Patrol is always present and are, therefore, in and around the park more than any other user group.

Sometimes large groups are seen at Monument Mesa, including political science or sociology student groups, activist groups, nonprofits or religious groups. Interviewees said local businesses sometimes have an interest in the border and are seen during the week, when the binational area is closed. They usually sit at the picnic tables, looking at the border from a distance; they often have a tour guide explaining the border issues and history to them.

Other people who are interested in the issues surrounding Border Field State Park come for field experiences and tours, including elected officials and decision makers. They

use this place to provide training and technical assistance to coastal decision makers, including city planners and natural and coastal resource managers, making decisions around the environment, and particularly the coast. There is interest at the local, state, and federal government level in what is happening in the park.

Some public sector interviewees said it was a highly used park, while a private sector representative said it seemed like a ghost town. Some interviewees were surprised that they had not seen any school groups visiting.

Popular park uses

People come to this park to see Mexico and the border wall, to see friends and family through the fence, to see the Monument and the Southwest corner of the United States, or to see the estuary and the view from the mesa.

"Most tourists come to just kind of see the border, as it is *Border Field State Park*."

(Private sector interviewee)

People use the park as access to go right up to the border at the part where the secondary fence is open enough to go up to the primary fence, which is monitored by Border Patrol. Tourists come to check out the border fencing, or visit through the fence. "I don't see a whole lot of people just hanging out at the Mesa without the intention of wanting to come to the wall," said a private sector interviewee.

Many local families come to visit their family on the other side of the border. "A lot of people waiting in line for their visitation," said a private sector representative. A lot of families enjoy the picnic space in the shaded area, under the shade sails, eating lunch, using the barbecues, playing soccer in the grass area, and going down to the beach. Some private sector interviewees said they never saw use of the barbecues. Other public sector interviewees said that they did not see families using the picnic area as much as before, but that there were still some who used the picnic area, especially when the road was closed to vehicles and they had to walk a long way to get there.

"Not very many people on the beach normally, but in the summertime you'll see one or two families on a weekend." (Private sector interviewee) People are often seen looking

out at the ocean and also the estuary. "The view is spectacular." (Public sector interviewee)

Horseback riding is quite popular with tourists, as this is "one of the last places you can ride your horse on the beach." There are also many local equestrian stakeholders, with a long history of equestrian use in the valley because of agriculture here, which used to be much more expansive; there was once a dairy farm, hence the name "Dairy Mart Road." With this legacy in the valley, people hold the equestrian recreational use very closely and ride their own horses and/or rent out horses for tourists to ride.

The Mesa is also used as a destination for walkers, hikers, cyclists, and both long distance and mountain biking. During the winter when the road is not accessible by car, people are seen walking up to Monument Mesa, often using the restroom and then going to the beach. These visitors, along with some who arrived by car to the mesa parking lot, were referred to as casual visitors by one interviewee, meaning those that were just coming to check it out.

Others who came to the park on the weekends, however, were said to have a directive: they knew where to go, they knew where to wait in line to visit their families; they appeared to be either really well-informed or well-seasoned.

A lot of people use the park for events on the weekends, and it can be quite busy then. Sometimes there are group yoga events or family festivals. Volunteers with the non-profit group, Friends of Friendship Park, and others, go there for the binational church service. Afterwards they break into friendly conversation groups. It was said that the church users definitely wanted to make sure their presence was known. Volunteers and others from the Friends of Friendship Park group on both sides of the border work on the bi-national gardens.

Park stakeholders use the park to bring training and technical assistance to coastal decision makers. The park is used as a platform to communicate about the challenges. "Nothing like experiencing it. People find those experiences to be pretty compelling, and change their perspective, actually going into the park and seeing the significant challenges" (Public sector representative).

Length of stay for park users

Interviewees said park users stayed at the park anywhere from 20 minutes to half a day, and many interviewees stated that the duration of a visit depended on the situation and how people arrived at Monument Mesa. "Several hours, because it is such a long journey for most people, all the way to the Southwestern corner, to drive through the park, get up to Monument Mesa, get themselves set up." (Public sector interviewee) Or, for instance, if families are coming by car on Saturday or Sunday to see their relatives through the fence during the designated time frame of 10am-2pm, they may only stay for a short time. If they are planning to stay for fun and they bring lunch they might stay for three hours. If they are going to the park to join group activities with volunteers, they often stay from 9am through noon. If they have to walk because the vehicle road is closed, then they usually stay for two to three hours.

History of the Park as Told by Interviewees

Kumeyaay history

"We walked with the archeologist over there, which is really interesting....And she was pointing out....the different areas and when the Native Americans were there....because that's where they did their fish boils and all this other stuff. So there's a lot of archeological aspects of the park too that I don't think that a lot of people respect. I think there's a big potential with the archaeological influence and just everyone who's used that park in the past to kind of expand that as a learning opportunity, which is, it's not there right now." (Private sector interviewee)

"Before Pat Nixon was there, and before there was even a border, up until 170 years ago, the whole monument was inhabited six months of the year by Kumeyaay Indians." (Private sector interviewee) The Kumeyaay followed the seasons, and it was all one estuary, one mesa. "So there was no obstruction to going back and forth and then living off the land." (Private sector interviewee)

Navy and Aircraft History

One interviewee from the private sector spoke in depth about the aircraft and military history of what is now Border Field State Park, explaining, "It's called *Border Field*

because there was an airfield right in this area here, with two runways." The Wright brothers were at one time planning to use this area for flight testing, but another group ended up developing aircraft here. Much of Border Field State Park used to belong to the Navy until the 70's. During World War II, there used to be a railway that went along the beach line and the Navy would have the train going as fast as possible so navy trainees inside could practice shooting from a moving vehicle. Per the same interviewee, "And they've been picking up 50-caliber bullets off the beach for years and years."

Besides training, the Army was responsible for overlooking and protecting the border and the coast. There were two sets of sighting bunkers, one of which is still visible up on the hill next to the U.S. border and another at Fort Rosecrans. Telephone lines conveyed messages between the two. One of the public sector representatives also spoke of the importance of interpreting this history. Both interviewees were quite concerned that this part of history is quickly being forgotten.

Friends of Friendship Park Bi-National Garden and Other Park Advocacy

Advocates emphasize the impact of First Lady Pat Nixon's visit to the park when there was only a barbed wire fence there. She had her Secret Service agents cut the barbed wire so she could greet people on the Mexican side. During that ceremony, everyone called it *International Friendship Park*. "So, that's kind of the spirit of Monument Mesa, the Friendship Park aspect of it." (Private sector interviewee)

As told by a private sector interviewee, the Friends of Friendship Park (FFP) has had a garden on both sides of the border since the early 2000s. On the U.S. side, the garden is on federal land, positioned between the primary and secondary fences. In 2009, people of both sides of the border staged a protest of the new wall which resulted in intervention by police, sheriffs, and federal agents.

A rolling gate was installed and Border Patrol made a commitment to having an agent greet visitors and allow up to 25 people into the federal zone so that they could talk to friends and family on the Mexican side, through the fence. The number allowed at one time was reduced to 10 in 2018. As told by several interviewees, FFP has had to remove

the garden and replant it during times of wall/fence replacement, and then in January 2020, the garden was completely bulldozed unexpectedly by Border Patrol, after Border Patrol found a weakness in the fence in the binational garden area that may have been used illegally. FFP continues to advocate for increased access through discussions with Border Patrol and others.

A lot of work to engage the community and beautify the park has been done so far. *4Walls International*, a group who use waste materials to build infrastructure and homes, assembled a group of volunteers to build an amphitheater area at the park gate/entrance/parking area, using eco-bricks (plastic bottles, stuffed with trash and sediment). They also created an interpretive area.

There is work that has been done by artists and musicians to communicate through art and music across the fence. Simultaneous binational projects have included art using mirrors, concerts, performances by Mariachi bands, and more. Native plant workshops and vegetable gardening workshops are conducted on both sides of the border. Border church on Sundays was said to be a celebratory event.

Salvemos la Playa is a big community event that happens twice a year on the Mexican side, but often includes the U.S. side for a binational activity to connect and advocate for the health of the estuary. In March 2007, the *Salvemos la Playa* event included the planting of the binational garden. Events in other years have included yoga classes, poetry readings, salsa dancing lessons, flying kites, and language exchange.

Interviewees' Feelings about the Park

It's a beautiful space, according to multiple interviewees. This space provides Californians with access to cultural resources and natural resources and is one of the most unique parks in the California State Parks system. It is an incredible coastal region, with more than a mile of a very isolated kind of beach and adjacent to the largest remaining intact coastal wetland in Southern California. "It's really rare." (Public sector interviewee) There is an abundance of wildlife here, including grey and white herons, seals, and pods of dolphins. "I'm looking at sanderlings and it's absolutely beautiful.

Yeah. And to be that close to the Coronados and that's a wilderness zone, and to be there, it's just, it's really, really special." (Private sector interviewee)

The Navy training yard abuts Border Field State Park. They regularly fly over the estuary, most likely in training exercises. "...the constant buzz of the helicopters and it's almost an enjoyable disconnect between that beautiful marshy, open space of what obviously is a wetland environment with this constant reminder of how close we are to the human community, the human core." (Private sector interviewee)

"I think it's pretty amazing that you can be in the urban core ...and you just take a small amount of steps and suddenly you were looking over this incredibly, incredibly peculiar open space." (Private sector interviewee)

The view from the mesa is incredible looking over the estuary, and out to the Coronado Islands, south to Mexico and east to the backcountry of San Diego. "It is an overlook and that's really the most important part to let you get lay of land as you are looking North and West to really understand the scope of the river valley." (Private sector interviewee)

Some said there had been not much change when referring to the physical aspects. One public sector representative said the road had been graded. Another interviewee said the park was recently remodeled, and a third interviewee said no changes were needed at the park.

The picnic area works well with very large shade structures and there are usually available picnic tables and barbecues. Because the shade sails are so large and have plenty of picnic tables beneath, they provide space for large groups, such as school field trips, to visit the park and be comfortable. There is the lawn area for visitors to hang out or for kids and adults to play, and decomposed granite (DG) paths connecting the areas. A public sector interviewee said the park was full of weeds. But other comments on how native flora just kind of surrounds the whole area. "The native flora is amazing." (Private sector interviewee) "It's no different than any other local park besides that maybe it has a little bit more native plants planted there because of all the Friends of Friendship Park and all the people that are interested in that site." (Private sector

interviewee) One public sector interviewee commented, however: "This is more than parking and tables and shades."

Several interviewees commented on the lack of interpretation or that more interpretation would be better. "Interpretively it's a really important vantage point that is not well interpreted now." (Private sector interviewee) "It is an extraordinary place to interpret the border; there's nowhere else like it." (Public sector interviewee) Another public sector interviewee said there is plenty of signage and interpretation.

Perceived Opportunities

"We are the same people and only divided by the wall." (Public sector interviewee) "I consider the Mexican side part of the park. It's the same Mesa, it's Monument Mesa still." (Private sector interviewee) The ability to connect at the U.S./Mexico border is unlike anywhere else. Friendship Circle, part of Monument Mesa, is where people should be able to feel close to their friends or relatives. There is hope that this park will return to the way it was many years ago. "I like the idea of, you know, the cross-cultural aspects of sharing a park with someone across the border." (Private sector interviewee) Another interviewee said that the area where people wait to go through the secondary wall to the border works well because it is a relatively large area where most of the people congregate, and also commented that it's the highest used area.

"The Mexican side is awesome." (Private sector interviewee) Border church takes place there even if the U.S. is not open, and people bring food to share, and pick fresh vegetables from the garden to add to their meals. The Mexican side has easy access and it is always open, including the garden where people who need food can pick fresh vegetables. The Mexican side is vibrant and full of people. A community of people has naturally been created there who go to help in the garden. "There's ... families walking by and people going to the beach and just, and so, literally hundreds, maybe thousands of people pass by the garden, you know, in five or six hours." (Private sector interviewee)

There are people on both sides of the border who are dedicated to this park and to the connections this park can provide to people and nature. For instance, the volunteer

group, "Friends of Friendship Park," provides hope to others, because they spend their time trying to make it better. They invite people to work in the garden in Mexico and also in the U.S. Interviewees say there are still people who have hope to return the park to the way it was.

Perceived Issues and Challenges with the Park

Landscaping and design

There are some critiques about the aesthetics up on the Mesa and specifically critique of how the vegetation looks, as well as the quality of the brick walls. "The landscaping's pretty abysmal." (Private sector interviewee) Several interviewees commented that the Border Patrol on ATVs run into the adobe brick planter walls and the walls skirting the top of Monument Mesa. They also drive over the native plants. Some of these broken planters have had to be removed completely due to the damage.

The picnic facilities were described as 'bomb-proofed' with an indication that the main value was avoidance of damage or destruction. However, it may not be realistic to consider different furniture that may be more aesthetically pleasing and comfortable.

Infrastructure

The bathrooms at the base of the mesa were put in a few years ago. However, water has not yet been hooked up to those bathrooms, so they are locked up and cannot be used. The bathrooms on top of the mesa get a lot of use when there are big groups of people there and when the gate is open and people can drive down there.

Lack of funding/maintenance

Lack of funding and maintenance caused three quarters of the park to become naturalized and mainly turn into overgrown weeds. There is one maintenance person assigned to the entire park and, "trash alone is probably an overwhelming job." (Private sector interviewee) But many of the trash cans are empty and could be removed completely.

Because of the lack of funding, the park has not been updated, and there is a reported lack of any funding allocated to trail maintenance. "What doesn't work well is probably

just the lack of maintenance and just how the other areas are not developed; these need to be developed.” (Private sector interviewee) There needs to be a clear budget and timeline for maintenance of the entire Monument Mesa. One person pointed out that the lack of community awareness causes lack of maintenance, possibly because of a lack of allocated funding.

It is especially hard for California State Parks to fund the access way to stay open all year. The road is only open three months out of the year and that is a major barrier. “A reflection of really limited capacity, the resources... are put into protecting the estuary from being choked by sediment, a huge investment in that. In recent years, there's been more consistent funding to maintain the sediment basin.” (Public sector interviewee)

Per one of the public sector representatives, the aesthetics in the park may suffer because the staffing capacity and funding are spent trying to keep the estuary protected from the overwhelming sediment flows which threaten the overall health of the estuary. The estuary on the U.S. side is the drainage for the Tijuana River as well as three other canyons in Tijuana. Tijuana has been built up very quickly, often in informal settlements along highly erosive canyons, and without stormwater infrastructure to prevent flooding, resulting in unfiltered pollution, trash, and an overabundance of sediment ending up on this side. Border Field State Park has the huge responsibility of managing the sediment capture basins and all the trash that comes through. Many beaches are suffering from a lack of sediment replacement, but this estuary has an over-abundance and is researching how to beneficially reuse the material while keeping up with a rising sea level. If over-sedimentation is not prevented or mitigated, it could potentially choke or bury the estuary.

Politics

Some interviewees said the biggest barrier is politics. There is a pervasive sentiment in a segment of the general public that does not want interaction between the United States and Mexico. This population does not want public money spent on improving this park, and they want the wall built faster and bigger. They try to get people arrested

and they have guns. They call the Border Patrol, they write letters to elected officials complaining, and they conduct protests.

Monument Mesa is the place where former Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the new policies on family separation, and is therefore the epicenter of some of that rhetoric on those policy decisions. We are in a critical moment of current policy around how families are going to be handled in these times. "I imagine that was an impactful moment for people who had previously used the park, (who had) challenges with documentation." (Public sector interviewee)

Much more restrictive now

According to most of the interviewees, the connection to those on the other side of the border is much more restrictive than it used to be, because of the new primary wall and the addition of the secondary wall, after September 11, 2001. Before then, there was much more interaction between the fences. Now it is much more limited, only on weekends, and maintained by the Border Patrol. "It used to be that you could walk right up to the fence when it was the only barrier. The mesa was wide open." (Private sector interviewee)

There is sadness around not having the freedom for families and friends to meet through the border like they could before. "Before families and friends had the opportunity to see each other through the wall, they could actually touch each other, put their arms through." (Public sector interviewee) It is much more controlled now and even the time slots are shorter. Only a few families at a time can meet at the wall; friends and family can no longer touch; and they can't see their faces very well, like they could in the past. There were weddings and family reunions for many years.

In addition, because of heavy rains and flooding from Tijuana in 2020, the road has been closed even to foot traffic. "Oh, you can't get to it...the cones and the sign that says don't go there. And then if you read the little sign, it says you'll be ticketed if you go there." (Private sector interviewee)

Presence of Border Patrol

No matter how wonderful the park may be, having Border Patrol at the park as a law enforcement element can be an intimidating factor for any visitor, according to most interviewees, and an upsetting reminder of the “whole political quagmire.” Some interviewees expressed that they deeply resent the fact that Border Patrol is there, as argued: “The presence of border patrol reminds you of not your proximity to the Mexican border as much as the, um, political weight of ‘defending’ that border. It was this constant jarring, interruptive reminder that people in power were exerting that power probably in ways that do anything but welcome the visitor.” (Private sector interviewee)

It is difficult to be comfortable with nature and enjoy those nature sounds when Border Patrol vehicles are flying by on emergency runs or carefully monitoring a visit at the wall not to exceed 10 minutes, or to “play the wait game and abide by one government’s detailed definition of policy for a 10 minute period of time.”

There is surveillance 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and anyone who is undocumented may be very uncomfortable visiting, according to a public sector representative. There are political and federal pressures that are in that space right now, and that may limit people from coming, more so than in the past.

On the other hand, a private sector interviewee said that the Border Patrol agents are super friendly. “They understand that it is Cal Parks land and they’re kind of using it at Cal Park’s discretion.” The border patrol agents have to watch all the land around the border. California State Parks does not want them driving their trucks across park space except for on the road, so they use their all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). The next design should include provision for Border Patrol to monitor given that we know they will be driving their ATVs in that area; design pathways that are ATV-proof. The Border Patrol is the user group that is at the park the most, as they are there 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They monitor the park area but they also use it. They use the area under the trees because it is the only place with shade besides the shade sails, and it is also a good lookout spot. The lead person at Border Patrol has asked the agents not to drive over the planted areas but it still happens.

Not as welcoming as it used to be

When asked if the park was welcoming, interviewees gave a range of answers, from, "Yes/no," "No," "Absolutely not," and "Yes;" the majority of answers were in the negative. The reasons it was considered not welcoming included park closures, road closures, the fact that no dogs are allowed on the trails or on the mesa, the presence of Border Patrol and the wider federal zone, and the restrictive schedule to go into Friendship Circle. "Because there's a sign that says, I'll get a ticket if I use it." (Private sector interviewee)

It was family-friendly before, like a public park. Families had picnics on the beach through the fence, as well as up on the mesa. In 2009, that all changed, when approximately one quarter of the park was taken away for the new federal buffer zone. "It changed the dynamic on the mesa." (Private sector interviewee)

Per a public sector interviewee, in the past people were not worried about being asked for their documentation. People really looked forward to their reunions, but now they worry about many things, including Border Patrol, and that they have limited access and time to see their relatives. Before, you did not have to ask anyone for permission to cross into the area to see families and friends on the other side. For the families who come more frequently, they know how the system works, but for those who come for the first time it may not be friendly/welcoming.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding tools are lacking as visitors drive into the park. Upon arrival, it is not clear to visitors where the park begins or how to get there. "My first time up there it's like, where are we? Where is this place? Where are you taking us?" (Private sector interviewee)

There is a dirt parking lot just outside of the entrance gate. While there is a lack of signage in some areas, at this site there is a lot of signage about the park. Next to the parking lot and the entrance gate is also some sort of water infrastructure which is surrounded by chain link fencing. On the fencing is an installed mosaic art installation. "And that's an interesting spot. I realize that art tries to mitigate other things, but I'm not sure it does a really good job at it." (Private sector interviewee)

After the gate to the park, there is a ticket booth which was reported by several interviewees as not welcoming or aesthetically pleasing architecture, but rather industrial and ordinary: "it's almost like there's a guard tower." After the ticket booth, there is a long winding road, which is not entirely clear to drivers or walkers if they are on the right path, until getting closer to Monument Mesa up on the left.

Interpretive Signage

It was a surprise for some interviewees not to see people spending a lot of time reading the interpretive signs. The signage might have been wonderful at one point, but now much of it has been damaged; they are "bent and warped and listing." The existing signage is "pretty subtle."

Vehicle road closure/flooding

"There's the wet season and dry season in Border Field. The vehicle road closes around six months of the year, so you have to walk out the other six months to get to the mesa." (Private sector interviewee)

The main barrier has been the lack of road access for a long time, and this has gotten increasingly worse over the last seven or eight years. The road is closed every winter for six months or more, and now it gets flooded more often and stays flooded longer. This is a huge barrier for park access, especially for elderly and people with young children. Able-bodied people can still access the park through a different walking road, in order to get to Monument Mesa. They can park outside of the gate and walk out, usually. At the end of 2019 there was a big rainy season, and the foot trail became completely flooded; thus it, too, has been closed almost every weekend since the rainy season started.

Some years are worse than others. As noted by a private sector interviewee: "A couple of years ago, this gate was only open for 16 days in the year."

Climate change is thought to be partially causing the increase in flooding.

Unfortunately, because of the overdevelopment in Tijuana and lack of stormwater infrastructure, the flooding results in contamination of the Tijuana River with sewage, excessive bacteria, heavy metals, and other contaminants. This poses a significant

environmental health hazard and public health risk to people on both sides of the border. Access to Border Field State Park is then closed to all visitors including those on horse or bicycle. As argued: “The contamination also affects everybody, you know the ecosystems and the public.” (Public sector interviewee)

“We have to see the park as a public park, give the same services as a normal public park where everybody can have access to do all the activities.” (Public sector interviewee)

“I hope it gets better up there, some drastic changes, but that's what would need to happen because the reason it's getting worse, I've heard it's because of climate change, you know the sea levels are rising and so that's creating more and more flooding. That's why it's getting worse and worse.” (Private sector interviewee)

“It (park design) works well when the gates are open.” (Public sector interviewee)

It's complicated

“It really makes people think, shows some of the challenges of doing work in this region too.” (Public sector interviewee) While there are beautiful aspects to the park, including the beach and coastal area in particular, and the fact that this is the largest intact coastal wetland that Southern California has left, there are also a lot of negative impacts, including what is visible in the sediment basins with the trash, and the effect of the fence. The issues are complex, especially for those working on and in this space. It is a thought-provoking place and it can provide a “very realistic picture of what it's like to manage land in a really highly impacted urban setting.”

Interviewees Suggestions for the Park

Interviewees provided many suggestions for making the park more welcoming, and improving upon what has already been done. It is evident that all of the interviewees care deeply about this area and this park and that they spent time thinking about what could make the park better as a place for people to connect with each other on both sides, as well as how to better connect with nature and the history of this space.

Ideas for what would make it more welcoming include the introduction of more plants, education programs, and permanent activities and information on why this is an important place, as well as what visitors can do to help protect it as well as enjoy it. "It's a very special place."

Improve Access

We need to figure out ways to improve the road and think about engineering solutions. "The road needs to be redesigned or recalibrated." (Public sector interviewee) We also need to figure out the stormwater and sewage that comes in from Mexico every year. "I do think that this park in the future, whenever it gets squared away and opened up and sewage cleaned up, ...is going to be a really good asset for this area." (Private sector interviewee)

Awareness and Promotion of the Park

Some interviewees said that not many people know of the park, and that there should be better promotion of the park. It can be promoted as a park where there are different activities and projects. The story of activists working to protect the park could also be better promoted. With memories of the way the place used to be there is a feeling of loneliness now, "...like nobody is there loving the place." (Public sector interviewee)

Bringing more people to the park will make it friendlier. "It's a ghost town." (Private sector interviewee) Having more people there on a regular basis will also deter illegal border crossing. "No one's going to want to jump across the border to go there. Cause there's going to be like this big vibrant area." (Private sector interviewee)

"Advertise it." (Public sector interviewee)

"I didn't know about the park and I've been in San Diego my whole life." (Private sector interviewee)

Art Installations

Monument Mesa⁹ is named after the obelisk marking the border between the U.S. and Mexico. Located on the Mexican side of the border wall, this monument is not accessible to people on the U.S. side. "I think if we're going to call it Monument Mesa, we should have a tactical, tangible replica that at least shows people what we're talking about, what they could see. Yeah. I mean, there's



something to be said for standing next to an obelisk that you simply kind of touched, from 1910 to say, wow, it's like four corners, arms out, you know, this is the mark." (Private sector interviewee)

Ideas for installation include adding informational signs and art that show how we are all connected within one large ecosystem, and yet divided by a wall. Something to connect this place with Mexico could emphasize the "feeling of friendship...remove the fences." (Public sector interviewee) There are stakeholder desires for a more vibrant look at Monument Mesa. The rest of the interviewees had many comments and suggestions, such as, "Add more color - happy colors, like a piñata."

Plants and Trees

More landscaping would be appreciated, especially landscaping that provided shade. It was suggested to have more plants, not like the typical park landscaping plants, but plants specific for the site. Some suggested more indigenous/native/dune plantings that are better maintained; even native plantings need attention over time. "You know, native plants need one to two years of a lot of handholding." Others recommended regular maintenance/trimming of the plants and trees. After that investment with money and time, the maintenance and water could be scaled back.

⁹ Image found on Wikipedia, unknown photographer, 1974, public domain

There was also a suggestion that documentation is created regarding the plants, landscaping and their meaning as well as maintenance requirements so that as staff changes this knowledge can be passed along. "The landscaping says a lot about everything." (Private sector interviewee) Best management practices with water retention and reuse are also recommended with any new design.

There are only a few trees on the entire mesa. The addition of new trees, and possible replacement of the existing compromised trees, was suggested, especially drought- and salt-tolerant trees that provide beauty and shade. Such plantings should not block the view of the ocean or Coronado Islands. One interviewee commented that the trees seemed odd or out of place. Suggestions include Catalina ironwood and Torrey pine, both native and uniquely adapted to this coastal region.

Hardscape

A playspace or playground for children would create a more welcoming environment for families, especially if seating for caregivers is part of this enhancement.

One private sector interviewee commented that there was never anyone sitting at the old picnic tables in the native plant areas. They were falling apart and they should be removed.

Design that incorporates the Border Patrol procedures was suggested. There are unique aspects to this park because Border Patrol is there and does their surveillance from there. Any design concepts must include consideration of compatible use by Border Patrol.

"The thing that would do the most good for the design would be to, you know, make the federal area more inviting." (Private sector interviewee) Having less walls and fences, and less enforcement, would make it more inviting. But there are also ways to improve the federal area through design, including using cameras instead of as many border patrol agents, for monitoring. Increasing the amount of time allowed per visit to the wall for families, friends and tourists would make the park more welcoming. The current allotted time is ten minutes, but it could be expanded or made more flexible.

Creative ways to connect

There are many creative ways that people are thinking about how to overcome limited interactions caused by the physical infrastructure, and ways to overcome the tall grey, metal fence, which stretches to three miles inland, also known as the border, the Border Infrastructure Project, and the BIP. The people brainstorming on these ideas include community groups, religious groups, and artists. In particular, there are efforts by Border Angels and Friends of Friendship Park to come up with examples of creativity in this space and ways to bring people together.

Since the main feature is the binational opportunity to talk to people through the fence and have cross-border communication, “Whatever design kind of facilitates that would be ideal.” (Private sector interviewee)

There are opportunities to self-fund the park through things like Ballet Folklórico, weddings, and other events. Fees for these events could offset the maintenance costs.

There are also creative design and infrastructure ideas according to interviewees: parabolic dishes, also called *whisper dishes*, would be a way of connecting people across the border, one on the U.S. side and one on the Mexico side, to easily and instantaneously communicate without electronics. There was a temporary installation during the time when the park was closed for further wall installation. The cost for installing these whisper dishes is \$10,000. According to the interviewee, California State Parks approved the installation concept at some point, provided funding could be obtained from a private source.

Another idea which was tried out included the use of telescopes and sign language. These are a little trickier to plan, compared to the whisper dishes, because the installation needs a straight line, and the line of sight would need to be from the mesa on the U.S. side. If only one was installed on the Mexican side, it could still be a way of connecting; people on the U.S. side could use binoculars or temporary telescopes. Real-time community science endeavors is another idea proposed, and could be binational.

Most of the ideas in the creative area are focused on the connection across the border, but some also include a better connection to nature and to the local ecology and understanding of human impacts, such as the *Border Gateway to Nature* projects, which brought in local high school students to construct art projects and an amphitheater style seating area at the entrance to the park. It was said that these types of projects could help connect local people to improving the park and making it more welcoming.

Grand Ideas

When asked what they would do to change the park if money was no object, interviewers gave a variety of responses.

Allow connection between the U.S. and Mexico

A local architect invested in this space, James Brown, has a design for a truly binational park. Friends of Friendship Park support that design as their long term vision, "Where there's no walls, or there may be some type of like a thin barrier, primary barrier, but no secondary wall, and it becomes like this cone-shaped area, where it's just anybody can come from either side of the border and hang out. It's like a neutral zone. And it encompasses like the bull ring on the Mexican side. And on the U S side. ...Then there's like a pier right at the border with a restaurant on the pier and there's a trolley stop that comes to the edge of the binational, huge park." (Private sector interviewee)

Make the park accessible year-round

One suggestion was to have an open gate and see that place as a public park where people can go every day. Another idea was to build a permanent road with bridges to allow regular access. "You've got all these beautiful assets sitting there. But you physically can't get to them." (Private sector interviewee) This would require serious engineering to build footings for the bridges in the marshlands. Because this involves water in the protected estuary, U.S. Fish and Wildlife would need to be involved. Environmental remediation or mitigation for building the bridges would be required. This all would require a "big money dump just for a bridge." (Private sector interviewee)

The other major issue, the source of the road problem, is to address flooding from storm water, possibly with a grant from the state. Fixing the storm water flooding issue would make the bridge building easier and more effective. Interviewees suggested making the water safe to walk across and swim in and be transparent with the public about the water quality. Raw sewage used to be dumped straight into the estuary, and there is still a public relations problem, including with school districts reluctant to bring their students on field trips. Cleaning up the water will require binational solutions because in the high water flows there is sewage, but worse yet heavy metals and contaminants that have long term health ramifications, coming from the Tijuana River and canyons on the Mexico side. This will require phenomenal sewage treatment and stormwater infrastructure on the Tijuana side where rapid development has occurred.

There has been ongoing communication between San Diego or San Ysidro or Cal Parks with the water authority in Mexico and ways to remediate this flooding issue. There were funds provided to government agencies in Mexico but it is not clear what was done with the funds in the past. "All the money that we were donating or giving them, would kind of disappear." (Private sector interviewee) But now there are some plans to make changes and follow through.

Include everyone and collaborate

"There's so many different organizations and so many like sides of the story and it'd be nice to get everyone together to make a design, and I don't know if that's a money thing or if that's just a pie in the sky kind of thing." (Private sector interviewee)

"The Kumeyaays were living in that area. Maybe we need to include more participation from them and promote the park as a place where many different people can do different events." (Public sector interviewee)

Add interpretation and signage

More signage was suggested for the way into the park as it is not always clear which way to go. More signage would add more confidence to first-time visitors. Add wayside interpretation on beach routes, on interior routes all through the reserve, taking advantage of opportunities such as next to benches. Create more opportunities for

unique interpretation. "The Acorn Group has some amazing ideas." (Public sector interviewee)

There is a huge opportunity to expand education about the Kumeyaay. There does not seem to be enough interpretive signage about the Kumeyaay and their history here. If there was more tribute to their history, visitors could better understand what the area was like before the wall, and the borders. More signage on the more recent history of the area was also suggested.

More signage about the history of the area, about the Friendship Circle and how it came to be, would make the Mesa more welcoming and "would spark more people's interest," and garner more support.

Other grand, or final, ideas

- Have a permanent educational ranger and have different activities for families.
- "Add a restaurant, a French bistro or a canteen."
- Put in playgrounds inspired by the Kumeyaay, not like typical playgrounds, but something more educational.
- Redesign the grass area layout to make it beautiful and so that parents can easily watch their children playing in the playground.
- Add native plants.
- Change the design so there is not the constant feeling of being watched by Border Patrol.
- Although not directly related to Monument Mesa, one interviewee said to put money into camouflaging the industrial settling pond.
- Taking advantage of some of the unique things at the park, Bunker Hill for instance.
- Do something to make it more friendly, more family-oriented, more welcoming, and less focused on Border Patrol.

"This is like an incredibly important moment to be U.S. citizens, and California is thinking about these issues, and finding ways to be more compassionate. And I think if there are creative interpretive ways to do that. I don't know, maybe it's idealistic, but maybe it

can help kind of lessen the blow of some of all, you know, what's happening in the immigration space in particular."

XIII. Analysis of Interview Data, Literature Review and Other Findings

The interview data was summarized and kept as true to the interviewees' meaning, based on my perception as possible, or quoted directly when that seemed to be the best way to convey a concept. The interview data was not fact checked. All interviewees were asked the same questions (see Appendix) and asked to focus on Monument Mesa when answering the questions, but if they included a broader geographic space in their answers, I did not exclude that feedback.

It appears that a major challenge is lack of physical accessibility (gates) and psychological accessibility (presence of Border Patrol). When it rains the road floods and California State Parks must close the entrance gate to prevent vehicles on the road. Most of these times, the park is accessible by foot, bike or horse, but that precludes those who are not able-bodied, including the elderly and those with small children. The park is essentially only open for vehicle access approximately six months of the year.

The border, now reflected in both the primary fence and also the secondary fence, preventing anyone from approaching the fence on the U.S. side is the obvious physical barrier. This borderwall, as Rael names them, is also a serious psychosocial barrier as it prevents families and loved ones from anything more than touching pinkie fingers through the tightly woven mesh fence. There is no cross-border access in Border Field State Park and the closest binational point of entry is in San Ysidro, approximately four miles east.

Border Patrol agents are the final barrier to or provider of, accessibility to bi-national connections. Agents are stationed at the entrance to the secondary gate, when it is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. They stand guard next to the gate, controlling access in terms of numbers who go through to the primary fence and how long they can stay. Border Patrol agents can be quite intimidating as they are armed and their job is to prevent illegal crossing of the border, and there can be a

sense of being watched while in the park. They are a significant deterrent to any undocumented park visitors, for fear of detainment and/or deportation.

The community surrounding Border Field State Park has a high percentage of very low-income households and also those who use alternate modes of transportation, including walking, biking, and public transit. The local community makes up about half of visitors with the other half being first-time visitors, including national and international tourists.

XIV. Recommendations

Two major issues affecting Border Field State Park, Monument Mesa and Friendship Circle are both exogenous: 1) water flow from Tijuana containing sewage, chemicals, heavy metals, trash and excessive sedimentation; and 2) the human economic, psychological and social impacts caused by the border wall and the armed monitoring of that border. This report was not meant to address those issues, but they cannot be ignored. Most interviewees mentioned these issues in multiple ways, and *road*, *border*, *fence* and *border patrol* were four of the top five topics in terms of intensity. Brief findings, analysis and recommendations are presented here.

Water and More, Flooding in from Tijuana

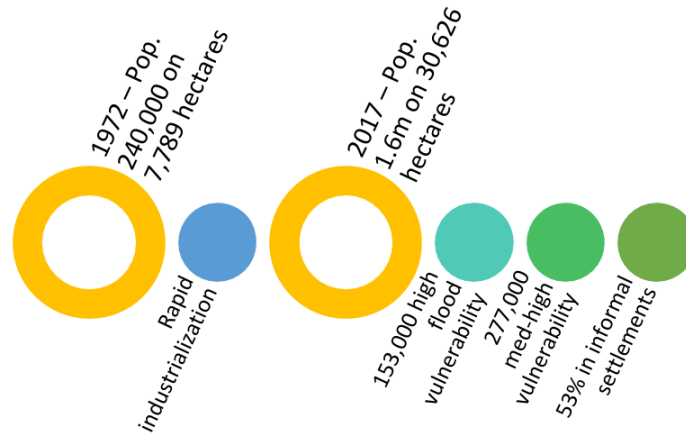
Flooding from the Tijuana River causes damage to the ecosystem, impassable roads, and a polluted ocean for local sea life, as well as swimmers and surfers.

“Two of Tijuana’s major challenges for coming decades are to secure future sources of water and to cope with chronic flooding problems when it rains.” (Sánchez Rodríguez & Morales Santos, 2018)

Tijuana lacks sufficient stormwater drainage and sewage infrastructure, as well as sufficient safe drinking water. Both of these issues are due to the fact that Tijuana has been built up very quickly (Figure 22), and especially along the highly erosive canyons, both in informal housing and formal housing, and there is very little permeable paving or landscaping to absorb stormwater.

Figure 25: Timeline of Tijuana's Population Growth (Data for figure from Sánchez Rodríguez & Morales Santos, 2018)

Timeline of Tijuana's Urbanization and Flood Vulnerability



Plastic and other trash flowing downstream in the Tijuana River are caught in trash booms in Border Field State Park. Excessive sedimentation is somewhat captured in nearby sedimentation basins. However, the sedimentation in these basins must be removed and filtered, and the trash in the booms must be hauled away. This must happen at least every fall to get ready for the next rainy season. These are all temporary measures and do not fix the root cause of the problem. In addition to the Tijuana River, canyon runoff in the watershed lacks filtration. Such highly contaminated water does not get treated as it makes its way through the estuary and into coastal water.

Cumulative and aesthetic impacts, even from outside forces, must be addressed per the California Environmental Quality Act, and NEPA and the Clean Water Act.

Three things are needed:

- 1) Tijuana needs an effective storm water collection system to:
 - a) provide sufficient clean water for its residents, and

- b) prevent excessive runoff which causes safety issues and physical damage to roads and other systems
- 2) Tijuana needs an improved sewer system to manage the increasing volume of sewage and urban runoff
- 3) Both the U.S. and Mexico need to treat all water before it enters the estuary

Regarding Border Field State Park, these issues affect the estuary's health, and directly impact access to the mesa since the road must close when it is flooded or drying out. Repairs are often needed each winter to the damage caused to the roads by the sudden flooding. Dredging for excessive sedimentation and ongoing removal of trash requires regular funding and staffing to manage. These impacts are therefore quite costly and put a strain on the maintenance budget for the rest of Border Field State Park, including Monument Mesa. Finally, the impacts from pollution produce a negative public health image and dissuade potential park users from visiting this special place.

Border Wall and Border Patrol

While the client for this project is California State Parks, and the Border Patrol and Border Wall are part of the federal government and its infrastructure, there is great opportunity for improved design to allow for public access and education, as well as continued and greatly improved relationships between these and other invested agencies. With a greater collaboration, all related agencies could better meet their goals, and better serve the public and the local ecosystem. More detailed ideas for the federal Homeland Security strip of land on Monument Mesa from the border to the edge of California State Park land were derived from interviewees' suggestions, background research, and direct observation, and do not necessarily reflect the views of California State Parks or their staff. The ideas and suggestions are in order of greatest magnitude and effort, to easiest solutions to implement (in the Appendix) and a sample is included here:

1. Remove the K-rails
2. Increase time slots for visitation at the fence from 10 minutes
3. Increase the number of people allowed at one time to approach the border fence

Overall Framework for Recommendations

A foundation for creating a space for healing and connection, should be based on the inclusion of the local community in design and nurture of this space; in particular, include the Kumeyaay community, as holders of the history of this space and as the people who have the deepest connection here. In addition, it is vital to ensure inclusion of those personally impacted by the border. Per Cruz and Forman, let the wall be the ugly thing that it is, and resist it not with beautification of the wall, but with creativity around it. When designing, allow this to be a place of healing, consider the five senses, and also how to enhance memories and experience. This incorporation can reflect memories of Mexico, memories of a time when connection was easier, and more. To further expand local community investment and involvement, Include local artists, such as through competitions for murals, mosaics, sculpture, and other installations, with the theme of connection, and a sense of place (artifacts, design and art that share the story and a sense of pride). Inclusion of local food vendors on the weekend could make park visits more festive and nurturing, and more inclusive of the local community.

Cross-Agency Collaboration

1. There are currently plans to install a Tijuana River Valley Regional Park Campground adjacent to Border Field State Park (Tijuana River Valley Regional Park Campground, n.d.). Cross-agency programming could take many forms, including trail or other educational activities that point users to both sets of resources.
2. Work with Border Patrol to not damage the landscape elements in the park, including the hardscape (edge walls, tree wells, sidewalks) and softscape (native plant areas, plants, trees) and hold them accountable for repair when damaged.

3. Work with Border Patrol and Homeland Security to design a more welcoming access and waiting area for Friendship Circle and access to the Monument
4. Invested/interested agency fair: Invite agencies to set up booths around the perimeter to talk to the public as well as other agencies about their programs.
5. Hold invested agency celebrations at the park encouraging cross-agency collaboration and information/resource-sharing
6. Support those individuals who are Firesouls for the space (someone who is passionate about the space and its healing capacity, and will work to promote it and advocate for it)

Access

Car access is limited in the surrounding communities, and in particular in the areas with least access to open space and parks. Road access is also challenging at times and until that is resolved, an off-road type shuttle could be provided year-round, possibly matching the times of the Friendship Circle visitation hours on Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 2 pm. The shuttle could go from the Nestor and San Ysidro neighborhoods to the mesa and back every hour, with several stops in the neighborhood along the way.

Wayfinding and Interpretation

I propose that wayfinding and interpretive trail design include walking and biking signs, along the road from the edge of the community into the park, and even out in the community, pointing to the park and inviting community members in. Engaging signage would make the road more interesting, especially for children, and based on knowledge of tree canopy and reduced visibility working to slow down cars, signage could do the same thing and slow cars down leading into and out of the park, and up to the mesa. This road is not highly impacted, but any effort to reduce speed will help with pedestrian, equestrian and cycling safety, as well as wildlife safety. These signs could describe the various ways of getting to the Border Field State Park and different sections of Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. Modes described should include driving, biking and walking, as well as transit options, and should also include

horseback riding given that there is a large number of horse stables adjacent to the park. Some of these horses belong to concessionaires who rent horses for trail riding. Others are owned and ridden by locals.

Some visitors may rely on Spanish as their primary language. Vibrant signs celebrating the cross-border languages of Spanish and English might be helpful for tourists or other visitors who do not know Spanish. These could include some basic greetings and place-based vocabulary (mesa, ocean, friendship, etc.), and highlight linguistic similarities. California State Parks could use proximity beacons to transmit audio messages in conjunction with reading interpretive panels. These messages could be provided in both English and Spanish, increasing accessibility among non-English speaking visitors, as well as visually-impaired visitors.

More interpretive signage would be helpful and was a key recommendation by most interviewees. It is important to tell the story of this place, which includes some sadness, but somehow allow it to be a place of hope and beauty as well, with the ultimate goal of creating and strengthening connections made at the park - to people, and to the ecology. Please refer to the Interpretation Master Plan (The Acorn Group, 2020) for comprehensive expert recommendations for interpretation.

Topics to consider for interpretation

1. Connection to history
 - a. Kumeyaay
 - b. Monument and other political border history. Include a model of the monument obelisk at a smaller scale, which people could touch.
 - c. Airfield and Army history (bunkers, airfield, etc.)
 - d. International Friendship Park, now known as Friendship Circle by Border Patrol (and where their land ownership lies now)
 - e. Ecology - extinct species. For example, local frog story (tadpoles from Mexico sent tenderly to re-populate SD in 2020)
2. Connection to Mexico
 - a. International borders
 - b. Families
3. Kumeyaay today
 - a. National relationship
 - b. Cross-border local relationship

- c. Location of ports of entry (not BFSP)
- 4. Ecology
 - a. Geology and Watershed
 - b. Biology
 - c. Climate change
 - d. Pollution
 - e. Flora
 - f. Fauna
- 5. Geography
 - a. Coronado Islands
 - b. Southwest corner map (show all 4 corners of U.S.?)
- 6. Methods
 - a. Signage
 - b. Art
- 7. Wayfinding
 - a. Name of places (TRNERR, CSP, BFSP, Friendship Circle/Park, Monument Mesa)

Programming and Cross-Border Connections

1. Call & repeat/phrase and chorus songs (such as Misery) or sermons across the border
2. Kumeyaay led educational, cultural or musical events
3. Paired (on both sides of the border) whisper dishes
4. Paired telescopes
5. Paired mariachi bands
6. Paired food trucks
7. Workshops on gardening with native plants
8. Have a State Park Interpreter and/or docent in uniform on site, at least on the weekends. This will provide multiple benefits, including knowledge sharing and ability to implement regular programs, and also presence of another official figure besides the Border Patrol. This may help mitigate the intimidation factor associated with seeing the border patrol upon arrival, and have someone else to ask questions of with knowledge of the ecology and history. Having an interpreter or docent on site may make the park much more welcoming. This person could also do some of the native plant care, especially for new plantings. They could also monitor the park and report any damage or maintenance issues on a weekly basis at the least. This regular observation could call attention to adobe brick walls or planting areas and allow for these issues to be addressed and corrected immediately.

9. Online educational events - both live and asynchronous video materials as well as reading materials, and audio-based geo-coded tours (see recommendations in interpretation)
10. Community science projects: in-person connections on the Mesa coupled with individual or team data collection

Hardscape Design

1. Add a portal as an architectural feature that marks the transition into this sacred space, including archways, gates, stands of trees, or other markers that designate the entrance into Border Field Monument Mesa, and Friendship Circle;
2. Add a sense of surround through space enclosures to provide a sense of boundary and safety. These features could include shrubs, trees, fences, gardens, or sculptures. The adobe brick walls provide this to an extent but further additions of trees, plants or other installation could enhance a sense of boundary. This boundary could also delineate the space that is California State Parks as separate from the Homeland Security land.
3. Provide shade and benches for visitors in the area where people wait to go into Friendship Circle. Shade can be through shade structures, umbrellas or trees.
4. Connect water to the bathroom by the beach and add outdoor showers and foot showers nearby.
5. Switch to semi-permeable pavement or pavers on the parking lot
6. Modify pathways so that complimentary curves are wide enough to accommodate Border Patrol ATVs. Make other paths narrow enough for more intricate solo exploration
7. Add bicycle racks
8. Create an amphitheatre-like multi-use space for large gatherings, including concerts, weddings, yoga, celebrations and educational events. (See Central Park in Playa Vista Los Angeles for bandshell example, which could provide shade, structure and relative transparency)
9. Repair damaged adobe brick walls skirting the perimeter of the mesa and also the planters - Negotiate with CBP to maintain safe driving practices on designated paths only and to repair any damage caused by their ATVs to plants, hardscape or other
10. Add vibrant colors to the Monument Mesa palette, reflective of San Diego/Tijuana culture (think piñatas).
11. Include Kumeyaay history in design

12. Add playground/play structure, in line with the region's natural history, Kumeyaay history, and binational heritage Add benches around the mesa for quiet conversation, or solo reflection, with journals and pens or colored pencil
13. Add/or modify other aesthetics including:
 - a. Reduce the number of trash cans in the park (from 3 for every picnic table to 3 for every 3 picnic tables)
 - b. Create covered shed to hide the two big dumpsters in the parking lot possibly near the bathroom, away from the trees
 - c. Remove dilapidated/unused picnic tables in the native plant area

Trees and Plants

1. There are very few trees at the park. Trees can be added to provide shade, beauty and structure, and if properly selected and planted will not obstruct the view of the ocean, or of Border Patrol in scouring the landscape for undocumented immigrants.
 - a. Suggested trees include Catalina ironwood and Torrey pine
2. Add more plants all over the park from a native, drought/wind/ salt-tolerant plant palette
3. Maintenance
 - a. Eradicate invasives
 - b. Trim natives at least yearly
 - c. Plan initial water cycle for new or replacement native plantings

Promotion

TRNERR shifted to online programming during the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be interesting to hear the feedback on how this went and whether an increasing number of people, and especially students, were able to benefit from the virtual educational events and resources.

We know awareness about the park and Monument Mesa needs to build. By increasing awareness levels, the park stands to be better appreciated and more frequently visited (See Figure 24). Increased awareness and visitation could add to a greater sense of vibrancy and community, and help justify increased funding, while decreasing negative public views about the park and its cultural significance.

1. Instead of just announcing when it is closed, announce when Border Field State Park is open

2. When access is limited due to road being closed, give ideas on how to get there with maps and photos of what to expect when:
 - a. Biking
 - b. Walking
 - c. Horses
 - d. Parking at the entrance
3. Work with the local governments and schools to increase engagement. The park is a wonderful asset for the community and an especially rich place for K-12 students to learn about the region's human history, ecology, politics, sociology, and so much more.
4. Increase and diversify park amenities and schedule such events as Food Truck Saturdays (or Sundays) - invite food trucks to a regular (weekly/monthly) time when community members could count on getting food, having a picnic with others gathered at the park.
5. Schedule summer concerts and/or performance series on weekend days or evenings, with a focus on local musicians and performers
6. Promote awareness of the various projects in the park and tell the story of other individuals, groups and organizations working to improve the park.

Figure 26: Cycle of increasing park awareness, visitation and sharing

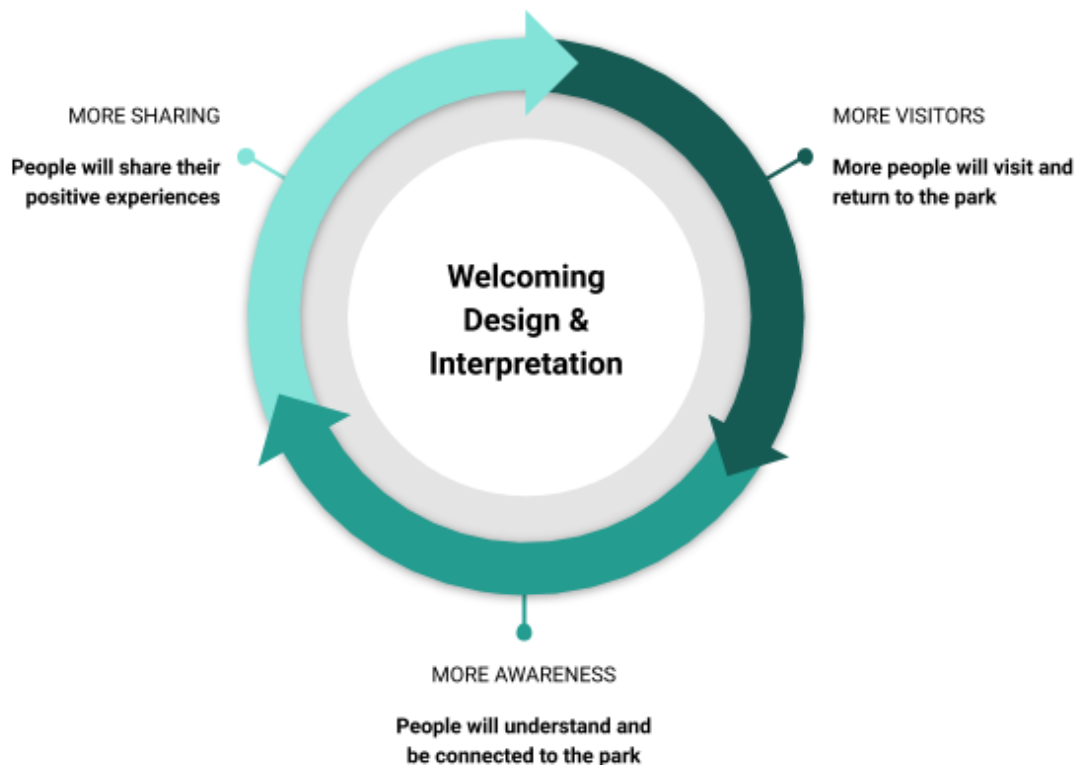


Figure 27: Horses on Beach, from Monument Mesa



XV. Limitations

Limitations to this research include the Covid-19 pandemic which prevented in-person interviews and further site visits, as well as access to non-virtual reference materials.

XVI. Recommendations for Future Directions

Recommendations for future work include creating a better understanding of the financial constraints and possibilities of the multitude of related agencies both south and north of the border to improve the pollution, flooding, and road access to the park. Additionally, increased awareness and use of the park is critical to it getting the attention and funding needed to improve and maintain it.

Figure 28: TRNERR Park Closure due to Flooding



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XVIII. Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. How long have you been working with Border Field State Park?
 - a. Please explain any work you've done at other parks
2. How have you seen it change over the years?
3. What do you like best about the park?
4. What do you see as barriers to use of the park?
5. Who do you see using the park?
6. What do the users do at the park?
7. How long do they stay?
8. In thinking about the park users, what seems to work well in terms of the design of the park?
 - a. What seems to be a limitation of the park design?
9. Do you think the park is welcoming?
 - a. Why or why not?
10. What do you think would make it more welcoming?
 - a. Especially in terms of design (park furniture, park layout, park landscaping of plants and trees, park signage, art, etc.)
11. If money was no issue how would you change the park?
 - a. Why?

Appendix 2: Description of California State Parks' Role and Relationships

California State Parks (CSP) manages Border Field State Park, including Monument Mesa. Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR) is managed by three agencies: County of San Diego, CSP and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a U.S. federal agency, under the Department of Commerce. They state, "Our reach goes from the surface of the sun to the depths of the ocean floor as we work to keep citizens informed of the changing environment around them." Southwest Wetlands Interpretation Association (SWIA) is a non-profit, which was established in 1979, dedicated to education, and to acquisition, preservation and restoration of wetlands. The Acorn Group is the consulting agency hired by California State Parks to create the ten-year interpretive master plan for TRNERR, which includes Monument Mesa. An interpretive master plan is a guide for all planned and designed communications regarding the meaning of the natural and cultural history of the estuary and park for visitors, most often through signage.

Appendix 3: Border Wall and Border Patrol

While the client for this project is California State Parks, and the Border Patrol and border wall are part of the federal government and its infrastructure, there is great opportunity for improved design to allow for public access and education, as well as continued and greatly improved relationships between these and other invested agencies. With a greater collaboration, all related agencies could better meet their goals, and better serve the public and the local ecosystem.

Ideas for the federal Homeland Security strip of land on Monument Mesa from the border to the edge of California State Park land were derived from interviewees' suggestions, background research, and direct observation, and do not necessarily reflect the views of California State Parks or their staff. The ideas and suggestions are in order of greatest magnitude and effort, to easiest solutions:

1. Open the primary fence as a port of entry (see International Peace Garden, U.S./Canadian border)
2. Build a much broader Friendship Circle, a neutral transboundary peace park, open to both sides, where people can physically be in the same space from both sides (see International Peace Garden, U.S./Canadian border)
3. Build a pier jutting out into the water at the border for cross-border interaction and a restaurant at the end, per idea from local architect James Brown, Harvard Loeb Fellow
4. Open the secondary fence on the mesa
5. Decrease presence of Border Patrol on Monument Mesa
6. Remove the barbed wire-covered fence on the beach
7. Remove the K-rails
8. Make visitation open at all hours Border Field State Park is open
9. Increase the hours the secondary fence is open from the current Saturday-Sunday 10-2 schedule to earlier and later in the day, and more days per week
10. Increase time slots for visitation at the fence from 10 minutes
11. Increase the number of people allowed at one time to approach the border fence