

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA REGISTER

More cottage rentals at Crystal Cove?

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The second wave of sprucing up beachfront cottages at Crystal Cove State Park – a project expected to take 18 months - has officially kicked off.

The renovation of cottages on the sand – which have been left untouched among a handful of cottages that opened for public stays on state land – will happen with funds raised from the public during the past few years.

The Crystal Cove Alliance, the non-profit that manages the land, has raised \$4.7 million through private donations, gifts, grants, and concession revenues.

"In times when most non-profits are struggling, we couldn't be more proud of it," said the alliance founder Laura Davick. "It's a huge milestone for us."

The state paid the initial bill of about \$13 million for the 22 units that opened to the public in 2006 during the first phase of the renovation. Thirteen of those units are rentals available for the public, and demand is still high, and getting a reservation remains a challenge.

"We're still booked at capacity," Davick said.

The state was initially supposed to contribute funds for the remainder of the project, but budget shortfalls made obtaining the funds difficult – so the alliance set out to raise funds from the public. Also, a portion of proceeds from overnight stays and the concessions goes back into a pool, to be used for Crystal Cove specific projects.

"We are now being looked at as a model within the State Park system," she said. "In today's times, we have something that is really looked at as sustainable."

The second-phase plan includes renovation of seven cottages. Two will be made into public overnight rental units, while the remainder will be designated for educational programs and park operations. An outdoor commons area and two more restrooms will be built.

The alliance is still seeking \$900,000 from donations to fully complete the second phase – the last part that needs funding is turning the turquoise cottage south of the property, which was made famous by the 1988 movie "Beaches," into a museum.

The Crystal Cove Historic District is a 12.3-acre coastal portion – tucked among sandy cliffs on the south end of Newport Beach – within the 2,791-acre Crystal Cove State Park.

The area started out in 1918 as a setting for films – the Hollywood folks would build huts with palm fronds – and it became an ideal location to shoot for a tropical, secluded-beach feel.

Families started vacationing in huts left behind by film crews, and then in the '30s tents started popping up. The state bought the area in 1979 from the Irvine Co. for \$32.6 million.

The cottages were occupied by families until 2001, when the state evicted them to make way for the public lodging plan.

There are a total of 46 cottages on the sand. Grant requests are already out for the third phase of restoration, which will renovate 17 cottages on the north end of the beach.

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