

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Coyote Canyon Wild Horse Historic District

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number Anza-Borrego State Park  not for publication

city or town Borrego Springs  vicinity

San Diego and  
state California code CA county Riverside code \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

California Office of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with columns for Contributing and Noncontributing resources, listing landscape, horse herd, and archaeological sites.

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/conservation area

Current Functions

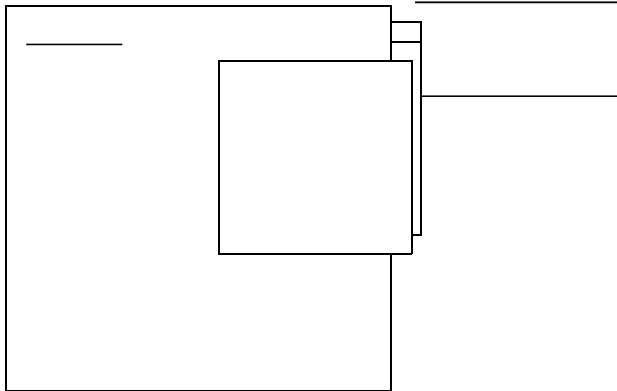
(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/conservation area/park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)



Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)



Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet #1

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
X B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
X D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See Continuation Sheet 2

9. Major Bibliographical References See Continuation Sheet 3

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- CONSERVATION
EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
SOCIAL HISTORY
ETHNIC HISTORY: NATIVE AMERICAN
ARCHEOLOGY: Prehistoric, Historic Aboriginal,
Historic Non-aboriginal

Period of Significance

1772 or later-present
??? BC -- present

Significant Dates

1772, 74, 1851

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
de Anza, Juan Bautista;
Garra, Antonio; Clark, Fred

Cultural Affiliation

Cahuilla
Hispanic
Euro-American

Architect/Builder

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
X Other State agency
Federal agency See Continuation Sheet 4
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Name of Property \_\_\_\_\_

County and State \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property (To be calculated)**

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet) **(To be added)**

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	—	=====	=====	3	—	=====	=====
2	—	=====	=====	4	—	=====	=====

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheet 5

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheet 5

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Thomas F. King, PhD, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization For Backcountry Horsemen of California date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number (Establish in-state points of contact) telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. **(In hand)**

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. **(Will do)**

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property. **(Needed)**

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (See Continuation Sheet 5 for additional property owners  
[Need to establish])

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior****National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet #1**Section Number 1 Page 1

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**Narrative Description**

Coyote Canyon, in California's Anza-Borrego State Park, was until 2003 the home of a small but stable herd of wild horses – the last known such herd in Southern California, and perhaps the last in the state. At the time of its removal in 2003 the herd was made up of four bands – each band comprising a familial group formed around a dominant stallion and sometimes a dominant mare. Although generally a stable organization, a band's social boundaries are fluid, as young males and sometimes young females are driven off or leave of their own accord when they come of age, joining other bands or forming their own and thus maintaining the genetic health of the bands and the herd they compose. The Coyote Canyon herd – that is, a herd of horses living in and around Coyote Canyon, though its membership has obviously changed over the years – has apparently been in existence since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and possibly much longer.

Coyote Canyon – anciently the homeland of the *Wīwaīistam* clan of the Cahuilla Tribe of American Indians and an important route of march for Spanish, Mexican, and American travel in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries between the California coast and the Colorado River, is the major perennial drainage in Anza-Borrego State Park, one of several roughly parallel canyons and valleys lying between the Santa Rosa Mountains on the northeast and the San Ysidro Mountains on the southwest. These linear lowlands are separated from one another by lower but usually rocky and precipitous desert ridges. The headwaters of Coyote Canyon comprise a fan of three smaller canyons – arrayed counterclockwise these are Horse, Nance, and Tule Canyons, and they come together at a place called Upper Willows or Turkey Track. A shorter canyon, Parks, enters from the southwest a short distance below Tule Canyon.

Upper Willows is the northernmost location in the canyon where water flows predictably (as a result of bedrock that forces the underlying aquifer to the surface) and horses regularly congregate to drink. In 2003 it was a principal congregation point for one of the four bands that made up the Coyote Canyon herd (“Band D;” see Ostermann et al 2004).

Horse, Nance, and Tule Canyons flow down from the high ground known today as San Carlos Pass, called “La Puerta” by 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century cattlemen. La Puerta was the site of a homestead ranch of the same name established in about 1891 by Fred Clark, an early cattleman after whom, together with his brother Frank, nearby Clark Lake is named (Reed 1963:34). San Carlos Pass is the approximate dividing line between the desert landscape of the Anza-Borrego and the oak grasslands that extend on to the north and west into the vicinity of Hemet and beyond, ultimately into the Los Angeles Basin.

From Upper Willows, Coyote Canyon runs southeast for some three miles through Fig Tree Valley – where Alder Canyon (sometimes referred to as Elder Canyon) joins from the southwest, to Middle Willows. Here Yucca Valley joins from the south and a spring contributes to water flow in the canyon, forming another predictable drinking place for horses, other stock, and people. Middle Willows was the site of an ancestral village of the Cahuilla tribe, and later was used by the area's stockmen as a cattle camp. In 2003 it was used

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Name of Property

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County and State

by all four bands making up the Coyote Canyon herd. The boundary between Riverside and San Diego Counties crosses the canyon at Middle Willows.

From Middle Willows, Coyote Canyon continues for another five miles to the southeast, opening into the expansive Collins or Joel Reed Valley, whose lower end is known as Lower Willows. The extensive Indian Canyon/Sheep Canyon drainage enters here from the west. A substantial tributary canyon also joins here from the northwest, named "Thousand Palms" by early stockmen (and containing some 380 palm trees). Today it is known as Salvador Canyon after Salvador Ygnacio Linares, born nearby when the Anza expedition passed through in 1775 (Bean et al 1991:81; Lindsay and Lindsay 1984:92). Lower Willows is another dependable source of water; indeed the several streams that come together at and flow out of Collins Valley carry water more or less year-round. Lower Willows was used in 2003 by at least two of the Coyote Canyon herd's bands (Bands B and C). Lower Willows is also the site of an extensive Cahuilla village site, was homesteaded in the 1880s-90s by the Reed brothers, and served as a cattle camp for many years.

At Lower Willows the canyon turns sharply to the east for something less than a mile, and then runs southeast again for another three miles or so, opening into the Borrego Valley and continuing through the valley to merge with San Felipe Creek. San Felipe Creek ultimately flows into the Salton Sea.

Another canyon, Dry Wash Canyon, parallels Coyote Canyon about three miles to the northeast, and was accessed by the herd near its northwest end via the Horse Canyon drainage. From a head somewhat above Lower Willows another canyon, Box Canyon, runs between Coyote and Dry Wash Canyons, but does not seem to have been used by the herd.

The range of the Coyote Canyon Wild Horse Herd as plotted in 2003 includes Coyote Canyon from San Carlos Pass down through Lower Willows, and up the various tributary canyons. It also extends beyond San Carlos Pass to the northwest to an indeterminate point outside the boundaries of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Finally, it extends up the low pass of the Horse Canyon drainage northeast of Upper Willows and then down Dry Wash Canyon.

**United States Department of the Interior****National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet #2**Section Number 8 Page 1**Narrative Statement of Significance****Summary**

Coyote Canyon has a broad range of historic and cultural associations (summarized on page \_\_\_\_), including the cultural history, traditions, and land use practices of the Cahuilla Tribe, the Pedro Fages and Juan Bautista de Anza expeditions of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Garra Revolt of 1851, and cattle ranching in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The particular focus of this nomination, however is on its association with wild horses as elements of the historic landscape and as cultural icons. Coyote Canyon was until 2003 the home of Southern California's last herd of free-ranging wild horses, a herd that had lived in and around the canyon since at least the early 20<sup>th</sup> century if not much longer, and that had come to be associated with the fundamental historical character of the desert West.

**The History of Wild Horses in Coyote Canyon**

The fossil remains of ancestral horses have been found at a number of paleontological sites in the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park; such horses (in appearance much like zebras) undoubtedly grazed in and around Coyote Canyon. However, the best evidence indicates that horses disappeared from North American some 8,000 or more years ago, to be re-introduced by the Spanish Conquistadores.

Although horses could have wandered into the area somewhat earlier from Spanish settlements in east of the Colorado River and along the Pacific coast, the earliest historically documented instances in which horses were in the area occurred in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1772 an expedition headed by Pedro Fages entered the Anza-Borrego area in search of deserters, and may well have passed through Coyote Canyon. At this time horses could have strayed, been lost, or been traded to the Canyon's Cahuilla residents. A somewhat more likely initial source of a resident horse population is the 1774 expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza, which passed through the canyon with 50 to 75 horses and traded with Indian tribes along its way. Still more likely is de Anza's 1775-76 expedition, a full-scale colonizing effort. On this trip de Anza and his 245 men, women and children drove over 300 head of cattle, and carried themselves and their goods on the backs of some 300 horses and 160 pack mules. This expedition worked its way up Coyote Canyon in late December, after enduring a snowstorm that killed many of its livestock. It is easy to imagine (though it is only imagining) that horses weakened by exposure might have been abandoned as the expedition struggled up the steep, rocky canyon. Pictographs in the San Carlos Pass area, presumably attributable to Cahuilla ancestors, appear to depict people on horses, and may represent the Cahuilla view of the de Anza expedition. The Cahuilla are said to have been appalled by the devastation wrought by the cattle herd on the canyon's natural environment as it passed through (Katherine Siva Sauvel, personal communication 2005).

Another specific historic event that could have introduced horses into the canyon is the Garra Revolt of 1851. Antonio Garra was a leader of the *Kuupangaxwichem* (“Cupeño”) tribe, whose territory lay in the headwaters of the San Luis Rey River around Warner Springs, a little over ten miles as the crow flies southwest of Coyote Canyon across the San Ysidro Mountains. In 1850, he attempted to organize an intertribal rebellion against American rule. In late November of 1851, Garra’s rebels attacked and burned the ranch of Juan Jose Warner near Warner Springs, killing nine Whites and taking cattle and horses. Garra and his supporters then withdrew to a village called Los Coyotes in Coyote Canyon, from which some days later he was lured out and captured; he was subsequently tried and executed in San Diego (Phillips 1975; Bibb 1976). Presumably it was to Los Coyotes that Garra and his followers took Warner’s stock, including the horses. In all probability, however, cattle and horses were already no strangers to the Cahuilla and Cupeños of the area. Anger at the San Diego County sheriff’s attempt to collect taxes on Indian cattle is said to have been among the reasons Garra initiated his revolt (Phillips 1975; Amero 1998). Where there were cattle in the 19th century desert West, there were almost invariably horses as well.

Tribal livestock raising apparently continued in the area throughout the 19th century; in 1883 the Cupeño are reported to have been holding livestock, including about fifty horses, in Lost Valley, near the head of Sheep Canyon, a tributary of Coyote Canyon in the San Ysidros (Brigandi n.d.).

However they got there, by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was apparently a herd of horses maintained in some manner by the Cahuilla in Coyote Canyon. Lester Reed, in his 1963 *Old Time Cattlemen and Other Pioneers of the Anza-Borrego Area*, tells us that Carlos Moreno (“Charlie Brown”) a long-term cowboy in the area, “always spoke of Coyote Canyon, Borrego Valley, and the Clark Lake as ‘The Ranch,’ and he called the Indian horses in the Coyote Canyon area “the Ranch Remuda”(Reed 1963:102).

The several ranches, homesteads, and cow camps established in and around Coyote Canyon in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries provided additional sources of horses. Particularly evocative is Reed’s description of the horses raised by Fred Clark at his La Puerta ranch in San Carlos Pass:

*“Fred Clark never married, and he did not stay in the cattle business to the end of his life as did Frank. I believe it was somewhere about 1905 that he sold his cattle to William Tripp, but he continued to raise horses. A number of his horses were either blue or red roans, and were the toughest horses to stand hard work I have ever known. A man needed to be a better than average rider to keep one of them between his knees when they decided you had been on his back long enough, and to outrun one of them, you needed to be mounted on a fair race horse”* (Reed 1963:40)

Reed also recounts that – apparently sometime in the 1920s – the notable local cattleman and prospector “Doc” Beaty butchered and ate (and fed to Lester’s brother Zeke) a wild burro on his homestead at the mouth of Coyote Canyon – a clear indication that wild equids were roaming the area at that time (Reed 1963:149).

Anza-Borrego Park Superintendent Mark Jorgenson, however, feels strongly that the herd is of relatively recent origin. He reports that:

*(o)ne old timer, A Mrs. Johnson related to me in about 1986, that her rancher-- husband, Charlie Johnson, had a group of horses escape from his corral near the head of the canyon during a storm in the late 1920's. Other old timers have told me that while pushing cattle through the canyon as late as the last cattle drive in 1927 they knew of no feral horses---they certainly would have roped them if they were there for the taking.*

*A woman, still alive, the former Mary Smith, now Mary Garbani, of Hemet, lived in Alder Canyon at the cabin site in 1940, when she was about 9 yrs. old. She told me she knew of no horses at that time, nor did she ever hear discussion of any feral horses there at the time* (Mark Jorgenson, email to T.F. King and others, 2/16/2005).

The perception of the herd as a recent introduction (though still over fifty years in the past) has come to be classified as fact in some academic and official circles. For example, the 2002 publication *Ecological Conditions in Coyote Canyon, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park* confidently states as fact that:

*(t)he feral horse population inhabiting Coyote Canyon originated from domestic horses that escaped or were released from nearby ranches in the 1930s or 1940s* (Ostermann and Boyce 2002:8) .

The only source the authors cite for their conclusion, however, is a personal communication from Mr. Jorgenson, whose opinion – to judge from his recent statement – is based on two anecdotal accounts.

It is not difficult to imagine Mr. Jorgenson's informants missing the fact that horses were living in or around the canyon; one of them was a child at the time, and has had over sixty years to forget, while the other passed through the canyon on a cattle drive, which might at least as easily have driven horses away as attracted them. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible – indeed almost certain – that the herd has varied in size over time, and that its range has shifted, contracted, and expanded. Like any other population of wild animals, the herd has doubtless responded to changing environmental and epidemiological conditions, and to changing patterns of capture and predation. Like any other healthy wild horse herd, the Coyote Canyon herd has probably been augmented from time to time by the recruitment of horses from local ranches and other sources, perhaps including purposeful introductions as well as escapes like the one reported to Mr. Jorgenson by Mrs. Johnson. The 2004 U.C. Davis study – prepared by some of the same experts who prepared the 2002 *Ecological Conditions* report – still bases some of its assumptions solely on the personal communications of Mr. Jorgenson, but now suggests that the herd “apparently became established in Coyote Canyon in the early 1900s,” and discusses the possibility of earlier origins (including the de Anza expedition) without reaching any conclusions. It also responsibly reports that:

*(t)here are a number of anecdotal stories describing how horses may have been deliberately released into the canyon, but none of these can be verified* (Ostermann et al 2004:2).

## **The Historic and Cultural Significance of Wild Horses**

The Coyote Canyon wild horse herd is significant as one of the last – if not the very last – wild horse herd in California, and as a representative of a rapidly vanishing element in the cultural landscape of the western United States. Historically, wild horses were a source of mounts for Native Americans and Euroamerican settlers alike, and the tradition of wild horse roundups is widespread throughout the west. Congress recognized their cultural significance in the preamble to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971<sup>1</sup>, which established the free-roaming wild horse as a “national heritage species.”

*"Congress finds and declares that wild free-roaming horses and burros are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West; (and) that they contribute to the diversity of life forms within the Nation and enrich the lives of the American people ..."*

<sup>1</sup> Public Law 92-165, as amended;

Name of Property

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Similarly, and more generally (referring to both wild and domesticated horses, the California legislature, in setting aside December 11 of each year as the “Day of the Horse,” found that the horse:

*...is a living link to the heritage and history of the State of California and the United States of America.*

Gradually, however, wild horse herds have succumbed to the development of the west, hemmed in by fences, shot as competitors with cattle and destroyers of crops, and even rounded up and made into pet food. In recent years, under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, the Bureau of Land Management has attempted to manage horses on federal lands, but this management itself has often featured the capture and containment of herds in specific managed areas, and the adoption and domestication of wild horses by participants in government-sponsored adopt-a-horse programs. The National Park Service has also taken steps to protect wild horses, notably at Theodore Roosevelt National Park, where they are explicitly identified by park management as parts of the “historic setting.” Truly free-ranging herds have continued to decline in numbers, however. Today there are few such herds still roaming the west, and the only one known in Southern California, prior to 2003, was the Coyote Canyon herd. On March 17, 2003 this herd was rounded up by State Park personnel and relocated to sanctuaries near Olancho, California and in South Dakota. At the present time, wild horses – for so long a notable part of Coyote Canyon’s character – are absent from the canyon, though the Bureau of Land Management has reserved four stallions from the herd, and several more horses are held by private parties around the town of Anza, just north of the canyon.

## **The Contribution of the Wild Horse Herd to the Historic Character of Coyote Canyon**

The wild horse herd has been a feature of the Coyote Canyon landscape for many decades at least. Like abandoned corrals and deteriorating adobe cabins, the herd served as a reminder of the canyon’s ranching history and its long service as a transportation corridor; at the same time, it had become a naturalized part of the natural environment – to such an extent that the cover illustration of *The Cahuilla Landscape*, the definitive 1991 study of traditional Cahuilla tribal settlement patterns and land use (Bean et al 1991) is a color photograph of wild horses. In traditional National Register terms, the herd was a contributing or character-defining element of Coyote Canyon as a historic district.

Coyote Canyon is particularly significant as one of the last places where a free-ranging herd has lived, where the presence and character of the herd are very well documented, and where the herd could very easily live again. In the years prior to its removal, the Coyote Canyon herd had become such an important element in the canyon’s cultural landscape as experienced by visitors that there were vigorous objections to the its removal, including a lawsuit, the introduction of bills in the State Legislature, and legislative requests for administrative action to return the herd to the canyon. A sense of how some people view the herd’s contribution to the canyon’s historic character can be grasped from statements by commentators like the following, which appeared in the media and on the internet around the time of the herd’s removal:

“To equestrians who visited Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the animals were a vision from California’s pioneering past — a herd of wild horses that had roamed the harsh desert of Coyote Canyon for a century.” *Bill Seeks to Return Wild Horses to Park*. Deborah Sullivan Brennan, Los Angeles Times 4/12/04

“They are a part of the heritage and history of the canyon. I have ridden Coyote Canyon many times and it’s pretty exciting to see wild horses. I think we’re very privileged to have them. I think the state park should consider them a resource and protect them as a resource instead of trying to get rid of them,” Mike Stephenson, Borrego, quoted by Leslie Ballah, *Borrego Sun*, July 6, 2002

“Apart from the devastating effects on the wild horses themselves, ... removal of the horses .....

changes the physical, natural and social environment of the Park, diminishing the wildlife experience of those who visit the Park.” Complaint, *Backcountry Horsemen of California and California State Horsemen’s Association v. California Resources Agency et al.*, <http://www.granitehillsdesign.com/cds/WildHorseComplaint.doc>.

“It didn’t take long to find them- they were where they usually hung out, near the mouth of Sheep Canyon. They were fat and sleek- the winter rains had been kind and the grass was deep in Collins valley. They didn’t look sick or starving as the State Park alleged in their justification for moving them. But I knew the wild and free life they lived (and I envied) was about to change forever...” Marty Jorgensen, Backcountry Horsemen of California.

“It is a sad day for all of us, and for the horses.” Robert Hayden, Santa Ysabel, “Eyewitness report on wild horse removal. [http://www.propertyrightsresearch.org/eyewitness\\_statement\\_on\\_wild\\_hor.htm](http://www.propertyrightsresearch.org/eyewitness_statement_on_wild_hor.htm)

## Animals as Elements That Contribute to a Property’s Eligibility

To avoid confusion, it is necessary to emphasize that this nomination does not propose that the Coyote Canyon wild horse herd, as a herd of horses, is eligible for the National Register. The Register is a register of places, and by most definitions an animal is not a place. But animals can and do contribute to the eligibility of places; they can be “character-defining” or “contributing” elements or “important features” of a place.

National Register 15, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, refers repeatedly to “important features” in discussing property integrity. A property must retain “important features” in order to be eligible. Feature types alluded to in the bulletin include topographic features, vegetation, and specific elements of a building’s exterior or interior<sup>2</sup>, but these are clearly given only as examples; they do not comprise an exclusive list.

National Register Bulletin 16A, *How to Complete the National Register Nomination Form*, directs nominators to list the “specific features” of a building, giving as examples porches, verandas, porticos, stoops, windows, doors, chimneys, and dormers. It also draws attention to “important decorative elements” like finials, pilasters, bargeboards, brackets, half-timbering, sculptural relief, balustrades, corbelling, cartouches, and murals or mosaics, and to “significant interior features,” such as floor plans, stairways, functions of rooms, spatial relationships, wainscoting, flooring, paneling, beams, vaulting, architraves, moldings, and chimney-pieces. With respect to historic districts, it directs the nominator to count contributing buildings, sites, structures, and objects. Something that contributes to a district “adds to the historic associations, historic architectural qualities, or archeological values for which a property is significant” either because it is eligible for the Register in its own right or because “it was present during the period of significance, relates to the documented significance of the property, and possesses historic integrity or is capable of yielding important information about the period<sup>3</sup>.”

National Register Bulletin 30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*, discusses how a landscape displays “characteristics” that define its significance. Most relevant to the question of animals is this bulletin’s treatment of “vegetation related to land use,” also listed as a “component” that may help define a landscape’s character:

*Various types of vegetation bear a direct relationship to long-established patterns of land use. Vegetation includes not only crops, trees, or shrubs planted for agricultural and ornamental purposes, but also trees that have grown up incidentally along fence lines, beside roads, or in abandoned fields. Vegetation may include indigenous, naturalized, and introduced species.*

2 See [http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15\\_8.htm#defining](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_8.htm#defining), accessed 9/14/04

3 See <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>, accessed 9/14/04

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*While many features change over time, vegetation is, perhaps, the most dynamic. It grows and changes with time, whether or not people care for it. Certain functional or ornamental plantings, such as wheat or peonies, may be evident only during selected seasons. Each species has a unique pattern of growth and life span, making the presence of historic specimens questionable or unlikely in many cases. Current vegetation may differ from historic vegetation, suggesting past uses of the land*

4.

So in the case of a landscape like Coyote Canyon, living plants and animals can clearly be components that contribute to a property's character.

Charles Birnbaum and Christine Capella Peters, in the *Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, refer to "character-defining features," of a landscape. Such features may include any "prominent or distinctive aspect, quality, or characteristic of a cultural landscape that contributes significantly to its physical character." Although the examples they go on to provide are all relatively static, and in some cases non-living – "land use patterns, vegetation, furnishings, decorative details and materials" – they define the term "cultural landscape" itself as:

*A geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein) associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values*<sup>5</sup>.

In summary, then, whether the term used is "contributing element," "contributing resource," "character-defining feature," "important feature," or "component," it is widely recognized that some elements of a property help to define its significance, character, and integrity while others do not, and in the context of a landscape like Coyote Canyon, animals may be among the elements that make a property significant. At Coyote Canyon, the wild horse herd was such an element.

## Missing Elements as Contributors to a Property's Eligibility

The fact that the wild horse herd has recently been removed from Coyote Canyon certainly affects the canyon's historic integrity, but it does not negate the significance of the canyon's association with the herd. Most associations regarded as giving places historic significance are with events, people, and patterns of events in the past. Thomas Jefferson no longer lives in Montecello; the Anasazi no longer live in Cliff Palace or Chaco Canyon.

Moreover, the removal of horses from Coyote Canyon was an easily reversible management action, and a popular movement is underway in Southern California to effect their return to the canyon. Coyote Canyon is analogous to a building that is among the last examples of a vernacular architectural style, whose original fabric has deteriorated. Such a building would almost certainly be eligible for the National Register, and would remain so if it were sensitively rehabilitated. National Register Bulletin 15 reminds us that while a completely reconstructed building must meet the stringent standards of Criteria Consideration E in order to be eligible, a *property that is remodeled or renovated and still has the majority of its original fabric* need not. Rehabilitated buildings, often including a substantial amount of new material, are routinely found to be eligible for the Register. In the same manner, Coyote Canyon possesses historic significance for its association with the horse herd even though the herd is presently absent, and restoring the herd to the canyon would be an act of rehabilitation.

## Other Character-Defining Elements

4 See [http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/nrb16a\\_III.htm#description](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/nrb16a_III.htm#description), accessed 9/14/04

5 Birnbaum and Peters, *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, Washington D.C., National Park Service, 1996, p. 4, emphasis added.

Although this nomination emphasizes Coyote Canyon's association with wild horses, the canyon is historically and culturally significant in many other ways as well. These other aspects of the canyon's significance are as worthy of recognition as its association with the horse herd.

Coyote Canyon is significant for its association with traditional Cahuilla Indian history and uses of the land, represented today by numerous village sites, bedrock grinding stations, agave roasting pits, trails, petroglyphs and pictographs. Well over three hundred such sites have been recorded in the canyon, representing virtually every aspect of traditional Native American use of the desert and its resources.

William Duncan Strong (1929) and more recently Lowell Bean, Sylvia Brakke Vane, and Jackson Young (1991) have documented the ethnogeography of the Anza-Borrego area. Bean and his colleagues in particular provide details on Cahuilla use and occupation of Coyote Canyon. They report that five lineages of the Cahuilla *W̄iwāīstam* clan lived in Coyote Canyon, using the canyon most intensively during the winter months (Bean et al 1991:28). Villages were maintained by the various lineages in the Horse Canyon drainage above Turkey Track, in Fig Tree Valley, at the mouth of Salvador (a.k.a. Thousand Palms) Canyon, near the head of Alder Canyon, at two locations in Middle Willows, and near Santa Catarina Spring at Lower Willows (Bean et al 1991:66, 81, 88, 90, 102). The last of these villages was visited by the Anza expedition, whose chronicler Fr. Pedro Font estimated that some 40 Cahuilla lived there in 1775-6. Bean and his colleagues comment dryly that "(t)his is a very low estimate typical of Font, at whose approach the Cahuillas hid from view" (Bean et al 1991:81). Archaeological evidence of village sites has been noted at all these locations, and at others, including extensive midden deposits, trails, bedrock grinding features, yucca roasting pits, and burial sites.

The canyon and its tributaries, springs, and landmarks are important in Cahuilla tradition as the home of the *W̄iwāīstam* clan of the coyote moiety. Cahuilla elder Katherine Siva Sauvel stresses that the canyon remains a place where plants and animals that figure importantly in Cahuilla tradition can live without molestation; it thus represents a relatively well preserved traditional Cahuilla landscape (Katherine Sauvel, personal communication 2005). The residential, economic, and ritual sites associated with the several lineages of the *W̄iwāīstam* clan, though damaged by looting, cattle driving and grazing, and traffic up and down the canyon, retain their significance as expressions of Cahuilla traditional land use and relations with the environment.

As noted above, Coyote Canyon also figured importantly in tribal and non-tribal history as the place to which the *Kuupangaxwichem* ("Cupeño") leader Antonio Garra fled after his attempted revolt against U.S. authorities failed in late 1851, and from which he was lured to his capture and execution (c.f. Philips 1975). Others in his party were executed and buried in the canyon itself.

Archaeologists have conducted surveys in Coyote Canyon at various times since the 1930s. A 1998 summary identified over 350 locations as sites associated with occupation by the Cahuilla or predecessor indigenous groups; these include extensive residential sites, cemeteries, food-processing locations, rock art sites, and ritual caves. Bedrock milling stations and agave roasting areas are common, and storage caves, trails, and shamans' caves have been reported (c.f. Schroth & Gallegos 1998:2-23 and Table 2-1). Additional archaeological surveys undertaken in the last ten years have produced data on additional sites (Sampson 2000). Major site concentrations are documented at Upper, Middle, and Lower Willows close to the springs that rise in all three locations, and in San Carlos Pass around the La Puerta ranch site. No substantial controlled archaeological excavations have been undertaken in Coyote Canyon, but many of the sites have been seriously damaged by non-professional artifact diggers ("pothunters").

The canyon also contains the archaeological remnants of historic non-Indian uses, in the form of roads and

trails and the sites of 19th and 20th century homesteads and cow camps. The best-known and best-preserved of these sites is “Bailey’s Cabin” in Fig Tree Valley, where a stone-walled cabin built around 1940 has been preserved together with its associated well and corrals. A relatively well-preserved corral is reported at Upper Willows (Schroth & Gallegos 1998:2-8/9), and the collapsed remains of an adobe structure thought to be Fred Clark’s La Puerta ranch house lie in a field on private land just south of Coyote Canyon Road at the crest of San Carlos Pass. Other cow camp and homestead locations are reported by Lester Reed (1963), but apparently have no current surface expressions.

Coyote Canyon’s association with the 1775-76 de Anza expedition is well documented; the canyon is recognized by the National Park Service as part of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (NPS 2003), and several Anza campsites have been marked with interpretive signs by Anza-Borrego State Park. The current names of landmarks like Santa Catarina Spring, Salvador Canyon, and San Carlos Pass reflect events associated with or names given by de Anza and his associates; these names have been restored by the Park at the expense of names used in the early 20th century.

Details on identified archaeological sites can be found in Park records and in the records of the California Historical Resources Information System centers at the University of California Riverside (for Riverside County) and San Diego State University (for San Diego). Details are not presented here for two reasons: to prevent the release of inappropriate information to people who might harm the sites, and because the focus of this nomination is on the canyon’s association with the wild horse herd. The Cahuilla and other historical resources of Coyote Canyon are, however, of great cultural and scholarly importance in their own right, and contribute greatly to the canyon’s eligibility for the National Register under National Register Criterion “a” for association with the cultural history of the Cahuilla and with the history of exploration and stockraising in the area, Criterion “b” for association with Antonio Garra, and Criterion “d” for the extensive information important in history and prehistory its archaeological sites undoubtedly contain.

## United States Department of the Interior

### National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet #3

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**United States Department of the Interior*****National Park Service*****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet #4**Section Number 9 Page 1**Primary Location of Additional Data**

Data on the Coyote Canyon Wild Horse Herd are maintained by Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, by the Backcountry Horsemen of California, and by the Bureau of Land Management. Data on specific historic places within the canyon, such as ancestral Cahuilla sites and the sites of old homesteads and cow camps, are maintained by Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and by the California Historical Resources Information System centers at the University of California Riverside (for Riverside County) and San Diego State University (for San Diego).

**United States Department of the Interior*****National Park Service*****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet #5**Section Number 10 Page 1**Narrative Boundary Description and Justification**

The Coyote Canyon Wild Horse Herd Historic District, as defined here, extends from the San Carlos Pass vicinity to just below Lower Willows, and to the upper slopes of the ridges on either side of the canyon. It also extends beyond San Carlos Pass to the northwestern boundary of Anza-Borrego State Park, and northeastward into the parallel Dry Wash Canyon.

Of course, the boundaries of the territory used by a free-ranging herd of animals are likely to shift through time, and can be plotted only approximately. The boundaries defined here for the most part follow those established by the 2003 study reported in *Feral Horses in Coyote Canyon, Anza-Borrego State Park*, by Stacy Ostermann, Esther Rubin, Rob Atwill, and Walter Boyce of the University of California, Davis Wildlife Health Center (Ostermann et al 2004). The boundaries mapped by the Davis study are the best-documented approximation available of the herd's territory. On the northwest, however, the boundary established here is just north of the boundary of Anza-Borrego State Park, while the Davis study indicates that the herd roams for an undefined distance beyond the boundary, presumably on private, Federal, and tribal lands. This is certainly the case, and was probably more the case in the past, when the herd was less constrained than it now is by fenced land, highways, and other impediments. Anecdotal accounts suggest that at some times in the past the herd has been limited to the upper reaches of Coyote Canyon (Mark Jorgensen email to T.F. King and others, 2/16/2005), but there appears to be no way of verifying these accounts, and it is hard to believe that given the opportunity, the herd would not visit the relatively dependable water sources in the lower part of the canyon. In any event, the boundaries set forth here are not intended to include all lands ever roamed by the Coyote Canyon Wild Horse Herd in the past, or the lands that the herd might roam in the future. They merely represent the best-definable boundaries of the area roamed by the herd as of the time of its removal from the canyon in 2003, and they embrace the core of the herd's territory in Coyote Canyon itself. Since the northwesterly boundary of the herd's territory in 2003 has not been established, and a boundary for the historic district must be set somewhere, we have elected to set the northern boundary of the district just north of the site of the historic La Puerta adobe. This structure was associated with the ranch that may have played a part in the origin of the herd, and that certainly was important in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century cattle ranching history of the canyon. This boundary also embraces a group of residential, processing, and ritual sites associated with ancestral Cahuilla use of the canyon, including pictographs depicting horses. This line is a short distance north of the Park boundary. We know from the Davis study that the herd used the area southeast of this boundary, and we know a good deal about its use of Coyote Canyon itself. We know less about its use of the lands beyond the Park boundary.

Name of Property \_\_\_\_\_

County and State \_\_\_\_\_