



Intersecting Paths

How Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail and Tumacácori National Historical Park Collaborate for Mutual Benefit

Two National Park Service (NPS) units in southern Arizona—one a national historic trail and the other a national historical park—have found opportunities to collaborate where their missions and resources intersect and overlap. By collaborating, they have leveraged their resources and found a common intersecting path, providing benefits to both NPS entities, other partners, and the public.

Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (NHT) and Tumacácori National Historical Park (NHP) were established for different purposes, but they share a one-mile segment of the Anza Trail along the Santa Cruz River in Tumacácori NHP. Many aspects of their interpretive narratives also overlap, as they are both Spanish colonial stories in the American southwest and have international ties to Sonora, Mexico.

As the only NPS site in Arizona that includes a segment of the Anza Trail, Tumacácori NHP is an integral partner with Juan Bautista de Anza NHT. This case study explores the use of collaboration by Juan Bautista de Anza NHT and Tumacácori NHP and shares lessons from their successes and challenges using collaboration that may be helpful to other NPS employees.

Interpretive Overlap

The overlap in the geography and interpretive stories of Tumacácori NHP and Juan Bautista de Anza NHT naturally leads to collaboration between the two units. They work together on wayside exhibits, and partner to provide interpretive services about the trail's history.

Their collaboration enables them to tackle larger and more complex issues that are sometimes difficult, such as the impact that colonialism had on the Indigenous peoples living in the area.

The fact that Tumacácori's staff knows the Santa Cruz Valley very well and the



Hikers on the Anza Trail between Tumacácori National Historical Park and Tubac Presidio State Historic Park.

Anza Trail staff has the larger regional perspective allows them to complement each other to provide multiple perspectives and a greater understanding of the relevant interpretive issues.

Park-to-Park Hiker Shuttle

During the winter months, a free hiker shuttle between Tumacácori and Tubac Presidio State Historic Park allows hikers to walk one-way the 4-mile segment of the Anza Trail between the two parks and return on the shuttle.

The hiker shuttle is funded by the Anza Trail, with the park handling the logistics.

Recreation is a significant part of the national trail system mandate, and this program encourages public use of one of the premiere walkable segments of the entire Anza Trail. In addition to its beauty through the riparian zone along the Santa Cruz River, both Tubac Presidio and Tumacácori have great historical significance related to the Anza Trail. This program supports both NPS units.

“The trail, because of its geographic nature, is in a very powerful position to link the stories between park units and nonpark units. People can really make an emotional connection through a trail that strings along a whole landscape.”



Melanie Rawlins, Tumacácori NHP

Working with Other Partners

The collaboration between Tumacácori NHP and Juan Bautista de Anza NHT is part of the efforts of a larger complex web of agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other entities throughout the Santa Cruz Valley that work together to tell the history and cultural stories of the area. The newly established Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area will provide further opportunities to work with partners throughout the area.

In many ways these larger collaborative relationships are natural since Tumacácori is a relatively small park and the enabling legislation for the Anza NHT specifies that it will encourage volunteer groups to participate in trail development and maintenance. Nonetheless, the two NPS units organically gravitate towards each other because they share common resources and the NPS mission.

Continuing Collaboration

By using collaboration as a way to leverage their intersecting paths, Tumacácori and the Anza Trail have found ways to better serve the public, engage in more partnerships with outside entities, and help one another meet their respective missions.

They are addressing many challenging issues such as a reframing of Spanish colonialism, multiculturalism, current affairs along the borderlands, and a centering of Indigenous perspectives.

The collaboration between Tumacácori and the Anza Trail has been informal to date. But staff from both units postulated that it may be possible to strengthen and expand their collaborative opportunities if they create a more structured process.

Read the full [case study](#) and [oral history](#) available from the [NPS Data Store](#) to learn more about the collaboration.

The NPS Collaboration Network

The NPS Collaboration Network is a group of dedicated employees who recognize the value of collaboration.

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“When you have a collaboration, the outcome is always going to exceed what an individual or a siloed team could do. It’s more than the pooling of resources, it’s also the sharing of ideas and learning from one another.”

Christopher Bentley, Juan Bautista de Anza NHT



The 1,200-mile Juan Bautista de Anza NHT commemorates and interprets the route of the 1775–1776 colonizing expedition led by Juan Bautista de Anza to the San Francisco area to establish a new presidio and mission there. Tumacácori NHP preserves three Jesuit and Franciscan missions and promotes understanding of the cultural interactions between Native and European peoples in the Santa Cruz Valley.

Lessons Learned

- » Effective communication is essential for successful collaboration. Communication can take place via in-person meetings, virtual meetings, phone calls, or email, but there are some advantages to in-person meetings when they are possible. Also taking the time to discuss projects and their outcomes beyond their basic parameters can further collaborative relationships and outcomes. Additionally, building in regular opportunities for communication to take place can lead to new collaborative projects as a result of expanded forums for brainstorming and the sharing of ideas.
- » Lengthening a project’s timeline can give the opportunity for all members of a collaboration to get fully on board and provide input. Slowing a project down may provide better results than rushing to complete it.
- » Maintaining good long-term relationships with colleagues and partners can allow a collaboration to weather operational challenges like staff turnover and positions remaining vacant for periods of time, and issues such as an individual project not going as planned.
- » Coordinating with a regional entity like a national historic trail, a national heritage area, or state-level NPS office can link NPS units together and help them tackle larger projects and more complex issues. It provides opportunities for fellowship with other NPS staffers and to work on projects that are broader than those that impact a single park unit.
- » Bringing multiple parks together on difficult issues like Spanish colonialism can help find the best ways to address complex topics and help the agency address them in a more systematic and comprehensive way.
- » Finding areas of overlap between separate programs or the missions of multiple park units allows each to leverage against one another to provide better products and services to the public.
- » Collaboration frequently produces better results because it brings together multiple ideas, more voices, more varied expertise among collaboration members, and a broader network of participants.
- » Collaboration with other NPS units can also include collaborations with other federal, state, and local agencies which can strengthen the internal NPS collaboration.