

Gary Watts

Planning Commissioner

City of Temecula

Biography:

Gary Watts was first appointed to the Planning Commission in 2015 and he was reappointed in 2016 and 2019. He has previously served on the Public/Traffic Safety Commission, Old Town Local Review Board, and the Elsinore-Murrieta-Anza Resource Conservation District.

Gary attended Humboldt State University and graduated with a degree in Natural Resources Management. He started work for California State Parks shortly after and worked for 32 years as a State Park Ranger (the last 11 years as the Inland Empire District Superintendent). Some of the parks Gary managed include: Mount San Jacinto State Park, Chino Hills State Park, Red Rock Canyon State Park, Lake Perris State Recreation Area, California Citrus State Historic Park, and the Antelope Valley California Poppy State Reserve.

Gary's management responsibilities included law enforcement, public safety, facility maintenance, cultural and natural resource protection, water treatment, and education/interpretation. Some of his accomplishments include:

- Development and adoption of General Plans for Chino Hills State Park and Mt. San Jacinto State Park.
- Permanent closure of the Coal Canyon exit and undercrossing on State Route 91 to secure a wildlife corridor linking the Santa Ana Mountains to the Puente/ Chino Hills at Chino Hills State Park.
- Appointment as a charter member of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Advisory Committee and participation in the development and adoption of a Monument Management Plan.
- Service as a board member on the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority, a Joint Powers Authority in Orange County.
- Participation in the Riverside County MSHCP Reserve Managers Operations Committee as the manager of state park lands included in the MSHCP.
- Acquisition of new state parks at San Timoteo and Wildwood Canyons.
- Construction and operation of new visitor centers at Chino Hills State Park and California Citrus State Historic Park.



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Biography (Continued):

Other State Parks Gary worked prior to his management position include: Anza Borrego Desert State Park, Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, Carlsbad State Beach, Torrey Pines State Reserve and Beach, and Santa Barbara Coast State Park.

Although Gary retired in 2008, he continued to work part-time and served as the statewide coordinator of California State Parks Quagga Mussel Response Plan, liaison for the Tejon Ranch Project, and conducted background investigations for the Department's peace officer hiring program. He officially retired in 2017.

Gary applied his experience outside of State Parks by serving as an adjunct faculty member at Palomar College from 1998 through 2003.

Gary and his wife, Julie, moved to Temecula in 1993 with their two daughters. Both daughters attended school here and graduated from Chaparral High School. Gary enjoys walking throughout Temecula and absolutely loves all things nature.

