



2023 was a year of progress for Jack London Park Partners and Jack London State Historic Park.

Jack London Park Partners (JLPP), the non-profit organization that funds and operates Jack London State Historic Park (JLSHP) in Glen Ellen, CA, reports progress throughout the 1,565 acres of the park in 2023.

“I’m extremely proud of all that has been accomplished by our staff, volunteers, board members and partners this year. The amount of support that we receive from the community continues to amaze me,” said Executive Director Matt Leffert.

“I’m especially grateful for our unique partnership with California State Parks, which continues to provide guidance, expertise and staff power toward our mutual goal of preserving and protecting this invaluable natural and historic resource,” he added.

“Unfortunately, due to the impact of a lawsuit, there were no performances by Transcendence Theatre Company at the park this year, which created hardships for everyone involved. We’re doing all we can to bring them back as soon as possible,” Leffert said.

Here are some highlights of the past 12 months at Jack London State Historic Park:

Park Operations

Work continues on the 14 historic buildings in the park, dating back as far as 1850. This year, settling at the Sherry Barn building was addressed and an assessment of the Distillery was begun. The garden at the Cottage was also renovated, making it more authentic to the times of Jack and Charmian London.

Quick work and emergency tree removal at the Pig Palace prevented damage to that historic structure.

More than eight inches of snow fell on Sonoma Mountain and park trails last winter, resulting in an unusually large number of fallen trees and damage to trails. Park staff, California State Parks (CSP) and

hardworking volunteers restored the trails – and in some cases, improved them – so that they can be enjoyed by all.

Wildfire mitigation was a major focus for California State Parks and JLPP this year, with a variety of techniques employed to reduce fire danger. CSP worked to prepare several areas for future prescribed burns, which were not able to be carried out this year.

Park Partnerships

The park and its [historic orchard](#) have received major support, in both volunteer labor and monetary contributions, from Sonoma Valley Rotary Club (Sonoma Valley, Glen Ellen, Valley of the Moon/Oakmont and Sonoma Sunrise) and Sonoma District 5130, which includes the 52 Clubs north of the Golden Gate. Taken together, Rotary provided over 850 volunteer hours in 2022 and 2023. They also provided funds and person power reintroducing peach trees to the historic orchard.

“In 2023, we gleaned – or harvested - 6,000 pounds of produce, including approximately 900 pounds of plums and 5,000 pounds of pears,” said Deputy Director and Director of Operations Eric Metz. “That’s almost three times what we had when we started doing this in 2021.”

Almost all of the produce from the orchard has been donated to [Farm to Pantry](#), a non-profit organization that supports environmental sustainability by rescuing locally grown food and sharing it with those experiencing food insecurity in Sonoma County.

The park continues its partnership with [Living with Lions](#), which studies the behavior and movements of local mountain lions, explores factors that influence their survival, and teaches children and adults how to co-exist with wildlife. Carefully positioned cameras provide valuable information about the lives of mountain lions within the park.

Volunteers

The park receives no public or state funding and relies heavily on a corps of 267 volunteers to operate the park. Fortunately, these volunteers love interacting with visitors and caring for the park. Many have been involved for more than ten years.

Altogether, they donated 15,000 hours with a total value of \$559,800 (Source: Independent Sector.org).

In 2023, 45 new volunteers joined the ranks of those who staff the entry kiosk, provide tours, staff the museum, drive the golf carts and perform other important functions.

Interpretive Retail

Jack’s Shop, inside the House of Happy Walls Museum, offers an extensive array of books by and about Jack and Charmian London, as well as souvenirs and items to help visitors enjoy their experience. Many items are also available on the [park’s website](#).

By the end of 2023, the park estimates that the shop will have total sales of \$110,000, including \$55,259 in book sales. This translates to 4,075 books sold.

Community Events

Events such as nature hikes, wildflower walks, piano concerts, readings, photography classes, painting Workshops, etc., are offered nearly every weekend. In 2023, there were 33 community events, serving 1,147 visitors. There were 250 free weekend tours, attended by about 1,500 people.

Private Group Tours and Hikes

Ciara Pegg joined the park in a new position created this year to develop and manage the park's tours and visitor services. She reports that 45 [private group tours](#) and [specialty tours](#) were provided to a total of 288 visitors from around the world. There were 283 participants in guided back country hikes.

Community Support

In May, 1,344 people attended Call of the Wild Weekend and the Wildlife Fair, many taking advantage of free admission that Sunday.

The park's major fundraising event, the gala held in September, was completely sold out at 370 guests. The lively "Fund a Need" part of the evening raised \$212,000 for the park's operation.

Development Director Laura Elmore reports that \$270,000 was received in 2023 from various foundations supporting the park.

Education Programs

This year, the Education Department conducted a total of 68 school tours and field trip sessions and served 1,602 school children - a 149% increase over the previous year – including 26 traditional school group tours with 543 students.

The [8th Annual Young Writers Contest](#) for 6th-8th grade students generated 45 short stories. Entries came from across the U.S. and as far as Bangalore, India. The first and third place winners were from California and the second-place entry came from a student in Wisconsin. The 2024 contest opens on January 12.

[Adventures in Writing](#) is a program for 4th and 5th grade students that meets Common Core standards for English language arts and literacy. This year, the program provided 18 field trips for 552 students.

Guided by Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) for California schools, the [Nature's Design](#) ecology program is a multiple-visit field trip program focused on ecosystem dynamics and biodiversity for 7th grade students. Participating schools are in Sonoma Valley, Petaluma, and Cloverdale sent 266 students to the program.

The culmination of Nature's Design is the Re-Wild My School student design competition. Students re-imagined and redesigned their school campuses to serve the human needs of the school and to increase nature and biodiversity levels on campus. Eighteen models were entered, representing 26 students. Judges awarded prizes to the top three entries which were on display in House of Happy Walls Museum through the summer.

Docents received innovative Interpretive Skills Training during three summer workshops. Guided by CA State Parks Basic Interpretation Learning System (BILS) and brain-based learning strategies, the docents learned:

- Optimal Engagement – Introduction to park interpretation/brain-based learning strategies
- Story Crafting – Building tour outlines around compelling themes
- Learning Through Play – Create engaging learning experiences for children

Plans for 2024 at Jack London State Historic Park include:

- Complete Phase 1 to develop a Regenerative Agriculture Exhibit and Outdoor Classroom in the park, bringing Jack London’s passion for organic farming and biodiversity into modern practice.
- Expand the Nature’s Design ecology program for local 7th graders and expand the Adventures in Writing with Jack London language arts program for 4th and 5th graders.
- Introduce a new school program focused on early learners (K-1st) so that the youngest students can explore the natural world through art and science.
- Support California State Parks in completing two prescribed burns to reduce fire-intensifying fuels in the park.
- California State Parks will be releasing details soon about the transfer of jurisdiction of the Sonoma Developmental Center open space to CSP.

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About Jack London State Historic Park

Jack London State Historic Park, in the heart of the Sonoma Valley, is operated and funded by Jack London Park Partners, one of the first non-profit organizations to be entrusted with management of a state park on behalf of the people of California. Funding to keep the park going strong is generated from visitors, members, and generous donors. Learn more about the park at <https://jacklondonpark.com/> and on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

#JackLondonStatePark, #SonomaCounty

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