

**SECTION 3:
COMMUNITY
PLAN**

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COMMUNITY HISTORY

Descanso is a Spanish work meaning rest, repose or tranquility. As applied to a particular area. It means "a place of rest." Still a small community, Descanso lies in the foothills of the Cuyamaca Mountain Range at an elevation of 3,450 feet, approximately 40 miles east of San Diego, California.

Although the history of this area reaches far into the past, it was not until 1879 that the name "Descanso" appears in county records. It was known to Indians and early white settlers by the Indian name "Na-Wa-Ti-e" (rendered in Spanish as "Guatay"), which means "Council House" or "Big Chief's House". The greater valley spreading southwest was called "Big Guatay Valley"; the smaller, through which the Sweetwater River flows, was known as "Little Guatay."

The Indians, whose presence here has been traced back 11,000 years, were of the Hokan family who came out of the deserts in Arizona and Colorado to settle here. They were a peaceful, pastoral people, gatherers of nuts and hunters of small animals.

Descanso owes its name to Ysadora Ellis, so the story goes. In about 1879 a party of young surveyors was surveying township lines in the mountains east of San Diego. When working in the Viejas Valley, they had to climb the steep grade, to stay at the Ellis home (roughly where the Ranger Station is today). It was stated this is like a bit of heaven, to which Mrs. Ellis said, "In Spanish, Descanso means a place of rest".

The white man did not intrude into the Indian region of the Cuyamacas (Ah-ha-Kwe-ah-mac meaning "Rain Beyond") until the Spanish incursion into California which began in 1540, but reached this area in 1769 when the military and missionary expedition under Gaspar de Portola arrived in Alta California. The Spanish occupation ended in 1810 when Mexico proclaimed independence from Spain.

In 1782 Don Pedro Fages, from the San Diego Mission, passed through the Descanso area on his way back from the desert. At first he followed the De Anza trail but decided to take an old Indian road over the Cuyamacas, into then unexplored territory. The importance of the Fages incursion into the area was major. Not only did Fages return to San Diego with lyrical descriptions of the large stands of fir and pine, so accessible to the town of San Diego (at that time timber was being shipped in from the north by sea at great expense) and lush

pastureland, but it offered a new and shorter access through the mountains, making it possible to open up the area.

Prior to 1848, the Governor of Alto California , Pio Pico granted large tracts of land to members of his family and friends. One such tract was Rancho Cuyamaca given to Don Augustin Olvera.

In 1848 the Treaty of Guadalupe had ended the Mexican-American War and two years later California acquired Statehood.

Indians still thickly populated the Guatay Valley in 1850 when the first pioneers began to locate there. 1870 recorded only eight Indian Family names, but white settlement had increased considerably. The electoral register for San Diego County for 1894 lists fifty-two names of voters in Descanso.

In 1869 Olvera sold off his claims to the Rancho Cuyamaca grant. Also land was now being homesteaded and ranchers were moving in.

For the next 50 years there were many settlers coming into the area from the east as well as from other countries. There was farming, ranching, mining, dairy cattle, etc. The community was beginning to build up.

The first known schoolhouse in the Descanso area was built by Charles Ellis and his neighbors for their children in the late 1870's . It was a one-room schoolhouse with a stone foundation and wooden walls, nestled among the trees on land adjacent to Old Highway 80.

in 1889 Descanso was an important stage station. The road in those days ran along the Viejas Grade with a very steep incline rising out of the Old Viejas Valley. It was a long hard pull for the horse teams as well as drivers. The first Descanso hotel, the Oak Grove Hotel, had been built in 1895 to serve the stage station. The hotel burned down in 1911 and wasn't rebuilt until 1926. It can still be seen on Viejas Grade, but is now a private residence.

At about this same time, local residents were discussing their need for a meeting hall and place where social events might take place. A group of townspeople formed a stock company known as Descanso Hall Association, which undertook to construct a hall. Although accounts vary on when the Descanso Town Hall was actually completed, it seems certain that it was under construction in 1898 and completed sometime the following year. In the first issue of the San Diego Union newspaper for 1899, it was written that "the building fever did not die down with the completion of the new schoolhouse. The public enterprise of our citizens has been further evidenced in the erection of a new town hall, to cost when finished and furnished, approximately \$1,400. It had been built on private property, but in 1902 the land was deeded to the Association.

On April 24, 1914, members of the Descanso Improvement Club applied to the Board of Supervisors of San Diego County for a branch of the County Library in Descanso. The petition was granted. The library didn't have a permanent building, but was housed in the store, hotel, homes, etc. Then In 1961 a permanent place was found on land leased from the County Road Department. It was located in a building built by the Public Works Department. This was on Viejas Grade across from Perkins Store. The lot was fenced and shelves installed to accommodate 1500 books. This "minibuilding", as it has been called, achieved fame when it was considered for the Guinness Book of Records as the smallest in the nation. It served the community for 36 years with faithful persistence. The new library opened May 23, 1997. The old small library was moved onto the property on River Dr. where the new library was built. The Friends of Descanso Library use it to house books to be sold at their monthly book sale.

The pioneers of this community were not unaware of the importance of a good education for their children. With the population growth in the community, it became necessary later to find land suitable for a new and larger school. In August of 1903 several grant deeds were recorded for land given by residents to build a new school. The land was deeded to the Descanso School District. With help from many volunteers "The Little Red School House" was built across from the Sweetwater River. This school served the community until 1935 when the present school was built.

A charming little cemetery nestles among the oaks of the Ellis Ranch on Highway 79. A plaque at the gate tells us that is a non-denominational cemetery, founded in 1871, by Charles and Ysadora Ellis. The grass-covered gravesites are indicated by wood or cement crosses, cement slabs, or simple native stones. Some are etched only with initials.

The present Cleveland National Forest was established as the San Jacinto Forest Reserve in 1897 by presidential proclamation under Theodore Roosevelt. It included more than three million acres. The government retained the timber, mining, and sand and gravel rights. In 1907, it became part of the National Forest System for better administration. The following year, it was moved from the Department of Interior to the Department of Agriculture and renamed the Cleveland National Forest after President Cleveland.

The Descanso District originally consisted of two divisions: Campo/Laguna and Chiquito/Guatay. District headquarters were located at Descanso, it being at that time the only "city" in the district. Other stations were established at Guatay, Ramona and Lakeside. In 1971 the headquarters were moved to Alpine.

A number of stores in a variety of sites are known to have served the Descanso community since the first opened in 1860. For many years the Oak Grove Store operated out of the Oak Grove Hotel, known later as the Tavern. Another store

was opened some way down Viejas Grade after the hotel burned down and before it was rebuilt. In the 1870's when the store started, Descanso was on the main highway. The highway came up from Borrego, through Julian, across Cuyamaca and down old Viejas Grade into San Diego. Descanso was a full day's travel out of San Diego by horse-drawn stage and all uphill. Perhaps no name has become more associated with Descanso as that of Perkins. Perkins store has been a landmark and rendezvous point for visitors for more than half a century. Although the Descanso store was established in 1875, the current building dates only from 1939 when the Perkins brothers, Charles and H.A. rebuilt after the store, then known as the Descanso Trading Post, burned down.

The Perkins brothers built the new structure with a post office next door with a separate entrance. Formerly the post office had been just a corner of the store. Hardware and clothing, which had been part of the previous store's products, were phased out by Perkins. In 1962 the 45ft. by 45 ft. building was expanded about 67 percent to provide additional storage space. Richard Laff bought the store in 1974 but the name remained Perkins Store, as it does to this day even though it has had several different owners. It is still the place in Descanso that everyone knows and uses as a reference point when giving directions.

By the turn of the century Descanso had the makings of a small town. There was the hotel, the town hall, the stores, and even a cemetery, but no churches. There was a priest who came to Descanso to hold services for the Catholic Church starting around 1918, but it was not until 1937 that they actually had a building of their own. They purchased the abandoned "red school house" in 1937 with one acre of land. Then in 1979 they bought 1/2 acre more. In keeping with its tradition of self-help, Our Lady of Light parish, which had been without a hall for its more than fifty years existence, started work on a parish hall and center in 1985, using primarily volunteer labor. This is as we know it today.

Prior to the building of the Chapel of the Hills United Methodist Church, there was no protestant church in the Descanso area. The groundbreaking in 1953, was the result of years of effort and struggle of community members desirous of raising their families in a religious environment. Religious meetings and services had been held irregularly in the town hall at first, then weekly meetings were held for those interested. At first there was no affiliation with a particular church. As the group grew they wanted to build a church and were able to get funding from the Methodist Church. They were able to build the lower building, later adding the upper sanctuary. The lower building is now the home of the Country Treehouse Preschool, which serves the community.

Lawrence Oliver, a prominent businessman from San Diego, bought a 2200-acre tract of land in Descanso in 1942. Here he grazed 250 head of purebred Herefords. His cattle were shown throughout the west. His family built a beautiful ranch house they used on weekends. The ranch was sold in 1958 but the Oliver family left a legacy in the Descanso Area. In 1949 Oliver learned that

the Sisters of Social Services, a Catholic organization, were looking for property to build a camp for underprivileged children. He gave them 22 acres for this purpose. They named the place Camp Oliver. It still serves many children each year and is located on Riverside Drive.

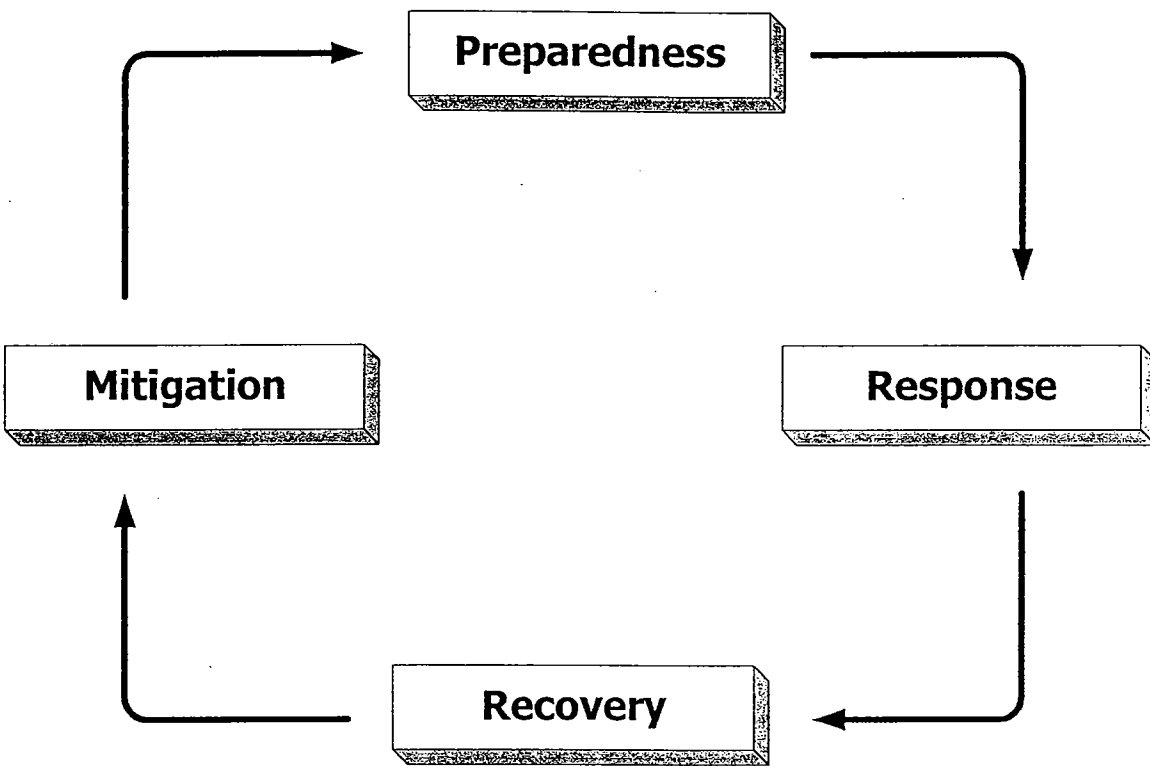
Traveling on Oak Grove Drive about one mile from Perkins Corner, one finds several concrete ponds formerly used as a trout farm business. Further on are several homes and horse corrals located in a large grove of Coast Live Oaks. This area is known as Hulburd Grove and is a part of the Descanso community. In 1884, three spiritualists arrived in the area, bought the 2,000 acres, and named it Mountain View Ranch. In time it became known as Hulburd Grove Resort with cabins for guests, a swimming pool, a picnic area, a small store and a riding stable. This was a resort area until sometime in the 1940,s when Mr. Hulburd died. The area is now occupied by private homes

In 1912 the McDonalds opened a subdivision in the Descanso district giving it the name "Bohemia". This was a cabin site about half a mile south of the main country road which went up old Viejas Grade into Descanso, passing the store and hotel on to what is now route 79. When the old Highway 80 was surveyed and paved, it by-passed Descanso but cut right through the Bohemia subdivision. The corner is now known as Descanso Junction. The Descanso Junction Restaurant and some of the cabins, which have been enlarged and refurbished are still in use today.

The Descanso area has slowly continued to grow. The population is now over 3,000 residents who enjoy the country living and beautiful vistas, as did the early settlers.

This information was taken from the publication "Descanso, A Place of Rest" written by the historical committee of the Friends of Descanso Library, and used with their permission.

Emergency Preparedness Cycle



Preparedness: Actions taken before an emergency or disaster to enhance response capabilities or to lessen the effects of the disaster.

1. Developing/maintaining an Emergency Plan
 - Identifying communications/notification systems
 - Identifying potential evacuation routes and shelter locations
 - Identifying sites suitable for use as Incident Command Posts/Staging Areas/etc.
 - Identifying Sheltering Locations
 - Developing a Resource Directory
 - Pre-stage/obtain emergency supplies
 - Generators, Radios, Blankets, First Aid Kits, Water and food, Batteries, etc.
2. Public Education/Community Outreach
 - Actions to take: ex: turn off gas, close windows, unlock doors
 - List of emergency kit items to have on-hand

- List of other items to keep available
 - Generator
 - Water pump
 - Etc.
- Coordination with other communities/groups/agencies
 - Red Cross
 - SDG&E
 - Sheriff
 - Fire

Response: Actions taken immediately after the disaster to rescue people and pets, protect property, evacuate at risk populations, provide care and shelter facilities, etc. These actions are typically intended to help minimize secondary damage and protect life and property.

3. Form a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

- First Aid/CPR
- Fire safety
- Light Search & Rescue

Recovery: Actions taken to return the community to normal. Response activities typically begin while the response is still in progress and continue long after the response phase has ended.

4. Address Short & Long Term Recovery Issues

- Short Term
 - Restoration of essential services
 - Gas
 - Electric
 - Telephone
- Long Term
 - Redevelopment loans
 - Legal assistance
 - Rebuilding
 - Fundraising
 - Crisis Counseling

Mitigation: Actions taken to permanently reduce the potential of a disaster or emergency occurring.

5. Mitigation actions

- Zoning regulations

- Brush clearance
- Encouraging residents to follow existing ordinances and regulations
- Bracing/bolting/replacing roofs or eaves

APPENDIX: E

**COMMUNITY PROTECTION
AND
EVACUATION PLAN**

This Community Protection/Evacuation Plan is developed in accordance with the San Diego County Community Protection/Evacuation Plan Template (June 2004), Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA) State and Local Guide (SLG) 101: Guide for All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning & Emergency Management, and the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 93-288, as amended).

This plan has been established to guide our community's response to a disaster, and to make sure these actions are coordinated with San Diego County, State of California, and federal planning and emergency response agencies and the plans they have developed. It also gives those who have been assigned specific functions in this Plan both the authority and responsibility to perform their tasks.

Appendix E includes:

- Basic information related to the Descanso Community response organization;
- Our plan for communicating within our community and with other agencies, including dealing with emergency power issues.

