

REVAMP THE CAMP

Architecture studio designs a new vision
for California state parks

ARCHITECTURE 503 STUDENTS

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Sitting around work desks this past spring at the Interim Design Center, graduate students in the Architecture 503L studio had to confront a sizeable assignment unlike any other at Cal Poly Pomona. The dozen students had been tasked with evolving the state park system.

Associate Professor Juintow Lin's studio had to design a series of cabins that would help build interest in camping as part of the work by the California Parks Forward Commission, an independent, blue-ribbon commission charged with proposing new directions for the state parks system. The students would need to do so by balancing issues of culture, sustainability, mobility and construction. Commission members said at least one model would eventually be situated in a state park, but their hope was the students' design work would become the new standard of what camping looks like in California.

"What we're really trying to do is a remix of the architecture and culture of camping. We want to appeal to a new crowd that hasn't gone camping a lot before and doesn't own a tent and own the gear," graduate student Laida Aguirre said.

Three years ago, when the state government was reeling from a severe budget crisis, a proposal to save money by

closing 70 state parks generated a political firestorm from park supporters around the state. Although the parks stayed open, the threat to the nation's largest state park system motivated some of the leading foundations in California to look for ways to reinvent the Department of Parks and Recreation.

To bring a fresh, independent perspective to the challenges of the state parks system, the foundations, under the umbrella of The Resources Legacy Fund, proposed to pool their funds to support a blue-ribbon panel to develop innovative ideas for the state parks. The Resources Legacy Fund includes support from the David and Lucile Packard, James Irvine and S.D. Bechtel Jr. foundations among others.

Commission co-chairman Lance Conn, a Bay Area businessman, said he wanted the panel to re-create the look of a traditional cabin to jumpstart interest among groups that aren't typical campers. College of Environmental Design Dean Michael Woo, who serves on the commission, was asked whether ENV faculty and students might be willing to take the lead in a project to develop innovative designs for cabins which would appeal to millennials, urban residents, and others who don't regularly go camping in state parks.

Associate Professor Juintow Lin's Architecture 503L studio class designed a forward-thinking cabin at the request of the Parks Forward Commission. The Wedge cabin (left) designed by the students was built this summer by Cavco West Industries. The cabin was shown at the California State Fair in Sacramento and the L.A. County Fair. The studio, including Bryan Charney and Emily Williams with Lin (right), designed the cabin this past spring. Photos: Paul Vu and Tom Zasadzinski.





ABOVE: *The Wedge cabin incorporates wood and lots of glass for a more modern look, can fit one full-sized bed and a twin-sized bunk bed, and also has plenty of seating. The cabin offers a 60-square-foot porch where occupants can get some shade on a sunny day. Photos: Paul Vu.*

“It is one small part of the work of the Parks Forward Commission but it is the one that is going to be very tangible,” Woo said.

Lin’s studio was given the assignment in early 2014, along with a series of conditions. The cabin designs aimed to be inventive, low-cost, eco-friendly alternatives to traditional lodging. The size of each unit needed to be small enough to be portable, and for cost reasons, electricity and water connections were to be excluded. Construction costs were to be kept to \$20,000 per unit or less.

Although the students in the studio had minimal architectural design experience, they brought a diverse array of other backgrounds to the project. One had worked as a general contractor. One was a mathematician. One had worked as a chemist. Others had studied landscape architecture and engineering. The students had to confront a share of additional challenges in creating the designs. They did not have to account for the structure of a building in their previous graduate studies and had only one course in environmental controls. The students were also mostly employed 20-somethings who have jobs, families, children and a slate of other courses.

“It has been a big learning curve for them because they started with no background in architecture and this project is quite different than a normal student project in that it has a lot of stakeholders that we

have been able to interact with, a real client, and it has issues that students don’t usually have until much later in their curriculum,” Lin said.

The first two weeks of the studio were spent researching the project, which included making a visit to Henry W. Coe State Park near Morgan Hill to investigate transportation. The students then spent the rest of the quarter designing and fine-tuning the cabins.

More than 10 distinctive cabin designs were created and the finalists were “The Wedge,” “Skyline,” “Revo Pod” and “C Pitch +.” The students presented the cabin designs to Parks Forward commissioners and state parks’ officials in June in Los Angeles. Several of the designs received overwhelmingly positive responses.

“It was nice to see all of the parks officials so excited about something new and different and exciting, and Juintow’s studio created that,” Parks Forward Executive Director Ken Wiseman said.

The Wedge was so well received it was selected to have a prototype built of it that would be shown in July at the California State Fair in Sacramento. The 156-square-foot Wedge has a unique roof that sits at a 4:12 pitch. It incorporates wood and lots of glass for a more modern look and can fit one full-size bed and a bunk bed with two twin-size beds. The cabin also offers a 60-square-foot porch where occupants can

get some shade on a sunny day. Student Emily Williams came up with the original design for Wedge. Bryan Charney and Antonio Fernandez also worked on the Wedge but the entire studio participated in the process.

“We divided up tasks in general based on experiences that people had, so certain people who were interested in design helped on the design of cabin and so forth,” Williams said.

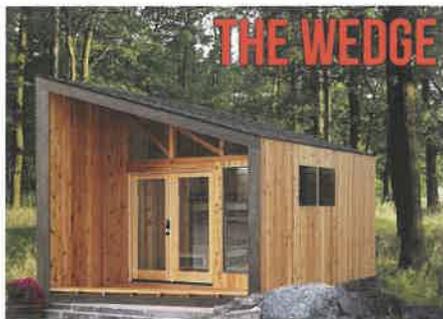
Cavco West Industries in Arizona built the Wedge prototype in July and it was driven to Sacramento, where it was positioned in a prime spot near the fair’s front gates. In a separate building, small, 3-D models of the studio’s other designs were displayed. With its prime location at the fair and Wedge’s unique look, many fair-goers stopped and gazed at the cabin.

“It really connects with the next generation who find the design intriguing,” Wiseman said. “They find the idea of having that in a state park exciting.”

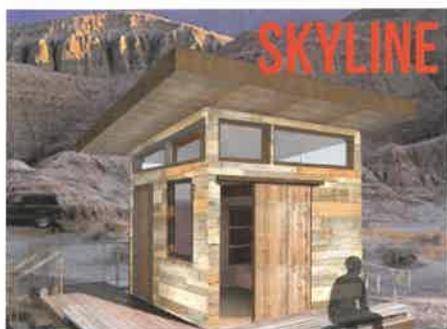
The Wedge prototype was also showcased in August and September at the L.A. County Fair as well as at the California RV Show in October. Attendees at both Pomona Fairplex events also reacted positively to the cabin prototype, according to survey results.

The cabins designed by the students could be in state parks by the end of 2015. ◀

A NEW BREED OF CAMPING



THE WEDGE has a unique roof that sits at a 4:12 pitch. It incorporates wood and lots of glass for a more modern look. The 156-square-foot cabin also has a spacious porch as well as an inside area that can fit one full-size bed and a bunk bed consisting of two twin beds.



SKYLINE includes clerestory windows, lots of natural light, custom furniture and a wraparound porch. The 195-square-foot cabin includes a loft as well as areas for beds and storage.



REVO POD is spread over 150 square feet and is a retake of the classic lifeguard structure. Lightweight and easy to transport, it can fit one to three people and provides elements of the traditional RV experience.



C PITCH + consists of wood and steel options. It has a generous amount of interior floor space that allows for multiple beds and plenty of storage. The cabin also has wrap-around windows.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE STUDIO AND TO SEE ALL OF THE ORIGINAL DESIGNS, VISIT WWW.REVAMPTHECAMP.COM.

THE WEDGE FOCUSED ON:

RELOCATABILITY: This allows the cabin to move once it's located in the parks system.

PREFABRICATED: The design was built on a chassis in a factory in four days and shipped on a truck to the state fair. It meets transportation dimensions.

BARE-BONES CONSTRUCTION: Design materials are no more than required (i.e. studs are exposed and the floor is painted plywood). The exterior has siding on both sides for fire protection. A hollow wall gets rid of the wall cavity, which often attracts rodents.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: The unit is designed to be accessible. Beds, doors, ramps, benches and hooks are all compliant with ADA guidelines.

LOW MAINTENANCE: Concessionaire was involved in design process.

RESISTANT TO FIRE: Fire protection guidelines were followed so that the unit can be placed in a fire severity zone.

INDOOR-OUTDOOR CONNECTION: Studio avoided a dark cabin interior. The unit has lots of light and makes all efforts to bring the outdoor environment inside with windows and French doors.

FLEXIBILITY: Design has multiple variations for potential bed placement. The roof slope can also adjust as needed for different environments. The possibility for variations in materials are endless.

RUSTIC MODERN: The cabin is a modern take on the traditional cabin.

SUSTAINABILITY: Windows are provided to maximize natural ventilation. The patio is longer on one edge, which can block the unwanted afternoon sun. Materials are low maintenance. The factory-built scenario reduces waste. The cabin is sized to be as small as possible to allow for three beds, and provide ADA accessibility.