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SIGNIFICANT THREATS TO CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS IDENTIFIED IN 2007 STATE OF OUR STATE PARKS REPORT

*California State Parks Foundation Report shows state parks at risk
from underfunding, development, roads and transportation, and deterioration of resources*

Kentfield, Calif., (March 21, 2007) – Inadequate funding, proposed development and transportation projects significantly threaten California state parks, according to the California State Parks Foundation's fourth annual "State of Our State Parks" report. Released as part of the California State Parks Foundation's fifth annual Park Advocacy Day, the 2007 report identifies four key areas where action is needed to ensure the accessibility and vitality of California state parks: Underfunding of state parks, development pressures on parklands, roads and transportation projects impacting state parks and deterioration of cultural and historic resources.

"2006 was a 'good news, bad news' year in terms of protecting and maintaining our state parks," declared Elizabeth Goldstein, President of the California State Parks Foundation. "We applauded the largest-ever budget augmentation for state parks deferred maintenance in 2006, yet proposed funding reversions in the 2007-08 Fiscal Year Budget, as well as new, high-profile development threats, endanger our state park system. California's park advocates and supporters have significant work ahead, as the path to sustainable funding and permanent park protection remains a challenge for the near horizon."

In addition to funding pressures that have generated a \$1.2 billion backlog in state parks deferred maintenance projects, the report highlights critical threats to six state parks across California, including:

- Two proposed mega-dairies on lands adjacent to Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, the site of California's only historic community founded and governed by African Americans.
- A new proposed power transmission corridor through Anza-Borrego Desert State Park which would require the first ever de-designating of state park wilderness in California's history.
- A planned multi-lane toll road which would force the closure of 60% of San Onofre State Beach, as well as degrade endangered habitat, archeological sites and surfing at Trestles Beach.
- A casino envisioned on lands immediately adjacent to and near three state parks that serve as the gateway to California's redwood forests: Humboldt Lagoons State Park, Patrick's Point State Park and Harry A. Merlo State Recreation Area.

"Californians, policymakers and private organizations must work together to realize the sustainable funding and permanent park protections needed to ensure that the legacy of our state parks is preserved for future generations to enjoy," said Goldstein. "2007 offers specific opportunities to take action to protect our parks, including supporting Assembly Bills 576 (Carter) and 1457 (Huffman), and Senate Bills 157 (Wiggins) and 404 (Kehoe). We look forward to seeing these bills enacted into law, and utilizing these tools to ensure much-needed protection of state parks."

State of Our State Parks Report Highlights:

Challenge #1 – Underfunding of Our State Parks

The California State Parks Foundation applauded the largest-ever augmentation for state parks deferred maintenance in the final version of the 2006-07 Fiscal Year budget. In addition, \$15 million was added to the base operating budget of the Department of Parks and Recreation for ongoing maintenance needs. The Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger must renew their commitment to fund state parks deferred maintenance and restore the \$160 million that is currently proposed for reversion to the General Fund in the proposed Fiscal Year 2007-08 budget. Adequate and sustained yearly funding for regular and deferred maintenance is vital to ensuring the health and accessibility of state parks.

Challenge #2 – Development Pressures on Our State Parks

Multiple state parks across California currently face significant new threats from proposed development, including two mega-dairies envisioned on lands immediately adjacent to Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park in the Central Valley; a proposed electricity transmission corridor through Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in San Diego County; and a planned casino on lands adjacent to three state parks that serve as the gateway to California's iconic Redwood forests in Northern California.

To protect Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, an irreplaceable cultural and historical resource for Californians and African Americans, the Legislature should pass Assembly Bill 576 (Carter), which will prohibit the construction of mega-dairies within a five mile radius of the state park. To safeguard Humboldt Lagoons State Park, Patrick's Point State Park and Harry A. Merlo State Recreation Area, the Legislature should pass Senate Bill 157 (Wiggins) to ratify a gaming compact negotiated between the State and Big Lagoon Rancheria that protects the three state parks from a casino or other commercial development.

Challenge #3 – Roads and Transportation Projects Impacting Our Parks

In addition to road proposals that impact state parks in the Inland Empire, North Coast, San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento, the proposed multi-lane Foothill South toll road threatens to force the closure of 60% of San Onofre State Beach, as well as degrade endangered habitat, archeological sites and world-class surfing at Trestles Beach. Passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 1457, which creates a consistent statewide approach to park impacts, is vital to protecting the state park system from damaging transportation projects in the future.

Challenge #4 – Deterioration of Historical and Cultural Resources

The California State Parks Foundation commends the restoration and opening of thirteen historic cottages in the Crystal Cove State Park Historic District. However, thousands of artifacts and cultural and historical objects sit in state warehouses unavailable for public enjoyment. The Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger must restore funding for deferred maintenance needs. The public sector should also seek appropriate private partners committed to the preservation of such resources within the state park system.

California State Parks Foundation Park Advocacy Day – March 26

On Monday, March 26, the California State Parks Foundation sponsors the Fifth Annual Park Advocacy Day. A diverse group of park advocates from across the state converge at the State Capitol to lobby policymakers on critical issues facing the state park system, including the findings of the 2007 State of Our State Parks Report. Park Advocacy Day is held on Monday, March 26, from 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. with a reception from 5 – 6:30 p.m. at the state capitol. For more information on Park Advocacy Day, please call 916-442-2119.

About California State Parks Foundation

The California State Parks Foundation is the only statewide non-profit organization dedicated to protecting, enhancing and advocating for California's magnificent State Parks. Since its inception in 1969, the Foundation has raised more than \$120 million in land, funds and artifacts for State Parks. A nonprofit membership organization, the Foundation relies on contributions from its 75,000 members, corporations and foundations to accomplish its work. For more information about the California State Parks Foundation call 1-888-98-PARKS or visit www.calparks.org.

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