



Park Advocacy Day 2008

TOP FIVE POINTS TO MAKE ON PARK ADVOCACY DAY

1. Closing 48 state parks and taking lifeguards off 16 state beaches is drastic and unprecedented and we strongly oppose this proposal.
2. We urge the Legislature to reject the Governor's proposal to close parks and find a funding solution that continues to keep state parks accessible and available to all Californians.
3. We urge legislators to sign the Save Our State Parks Legislator's pledge to oppose the closures and consider options that will create sustainability for the state park system.
4. Park advocates, park users, and park volunteers stand ready to help – as we've been doing for years – in making the state park system world class. By donating time, funding, skills and energy, we've been adding value to the experience of state park visitors. But in order to continue, there must be a strong and stable public investment in the state park system.
5. Please join us for the Legacy Awards Reception at the end of Park Advocacy Day!

BUDGET PROPOSAL TO CLOSE STATE PARKS – GENERAL TALKING POINTS

- This proposal to close 48 state parks and pull lifeguards off 16 heavily-used, popular California beaches is drastic, unprecedented and unacceptable.
- More than 6.5 million visits to the 48 parks will be eliminated, and \$4.8 million in revenues will be foregone that would have otherwise been collected if those parks had stayed open.
- At the same time, local communities that rely on tourism, retail and travel revenues related to state park visitors will be hit hard by the loss of these visitors.
- At a time when state residents need low-cost, accessible places for recreation, fitness, education, or simply an experience with nature, closing down state parks is absolutely the wrong thing to do and a huge mistake.

INCREASING USER FEES TO STATE PARKS

- It is appropriate to ask users to pay for the benefits they derive from the state park system. But they are already paying for that - current users of the state park system are already bearing a significant portion of the burden in keeping California's state park system open and available. User fees and specialized fees for state parks make up more than \$126 million of the total budget for the state parks system.
- The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has proposed that the Department of Parks and Recreation increase fees in order to raise \$25 million each year. Such a proposal will likely mean that day use fees could increase around \$4-6 and overnight camping fees could increase between \$10-15. (Typical day use fees are \$8-10 and camping fees are \$20-25.)
- The LAO's proposal is unrealistic and creates even more dependence for the state park budget on uncertain revenues.
- Any fee increase must consider the risk of pushing Californians to a point where they cannot afford to visit state parks, and therefore, won't go.
- EVERY Californian should be able to afford to visit state parks.

USING VOLUNTEERS IN STATE PARKS

- Volunteers play an important role in providing added value and enhancements to the visitor experience in state parks.
- More than 17,000 volunteers provide their time, talent and energy to the state park system on a regular basis, largely through roles that help provide interpretation and education for park visitors.
- Throughout the year, thousands more Californians volunteer their time for project-specific activities such as Earth Day, beach cleanups, environmental restoration projects, and more.
- It is important that this type of volunteerism continue and, in fact, be encouraged by the state.
- Volunteer organizations cannot, however, substitute for the necessary state commitment to basic management and operations for state parks. Volunteers cannot be expected to fill law enforcement roles, perform facilities maintenance and repairs, or conduct sensitive environmental restoration projects without the guidance of skilled park staff.

OTHER PROPOSALS ADDRESSING THE BUDGET CRISIS FOR PARKS

- AB 2005 (Jeffries) proposes to allow the state to transfer state parks to local governments.
- Already, the state park system enters into cooperative agreements with local governments to co-manage certain state park units. However, the state retains ownership of the particular park.
- Local governments are in no better financial position than the state when it comes to managing and operating parks and open spaces. Most local governments do not have the resources to maintain specialized staff that would be required for managing many of the state parks – archeologists, specialist biologists, architects, historians, etc.