



Promoting Excellence in California State Parks

The California State Parks Foundation and Save the Redwoods League are conducting a joint project to examine what excellence means for California's state parks and how it can best be achieved.

Twice in the last two years, California's state park system has been proposed to be shut down to the public—first in January 2008 and again in May 2009. These proposals have been eye-opening to all Californians who want to see their state parks accessible and available, now and into the future. As a broad coalition works to ensure the passage of a long-term, dedicated funding source for maintenance and operations needs, we have been focused on the budget of the department. Yet often in times of crisis, opportunities and new ideas emerge. In this moment, we believe it is critical to engage in a public dialogue about what excellence in California's state park system should look like.

This project seeks to develop a vision of excellence for the state park system in the 21st century, shared by the public and key park stakeholders, and make recommendations as to how best to promote that vision.

Project objectives are to:

- Engage the public in a dialogue about current park needs and the goal of a comprehensive, creative, and visionary plan for funding, protecting and operating California's state parks.
- Increase public support for an enhanced, improved and excellent state park system and the mechanisms to achieve excellence.
- Identify a shared vision of excellence for the state park system in the 21st century.
- Identify barriers to achieving excellence in state parks.
- Create a set of agreed upon measures to monitor, and publicize examples of park excellence.
- Identify pilot projects where short-term changes can be implemented to move toward excellence.

Data Gathering and Public Engagement

We are seeking to answer the questions: what are valuable characteristics of the current state park system and what do California's state parks need to offer to be appealing, accessible and relevant in the future?

The focus is on understanding:

- the key attributes of a vision of excellence for California state parks in the 21st century;
- the impediments to achieving that vision of excellence; and
- identifying innovative approaches already underway inside the parks or elsewhere that could be replicated.

The data will be gathered through a variety of methods, including: a comprehensive review of relevant literature and existing models, a web survey of the general public, focus groups of key stakeholders and diverse audiences, a roundtable stakeholder forum and personal interviews. Of critical importance is the public engagement in this project via an online public opinion/experience survey. Available to the general public, the survey will ask Californians what should be the primary purpose of California's state park system, what are the most important features of an excellent state park system, what programs, services, resources, activities or amenities should be offered, and barriers to participation.

The online survey is expected to launch by February 26, 2010 and will be available on both the California State Parks Foundation and Save the Redwoods League website.

The Vision Report

The results of the data gathering will be synthesized into a report that will be published and electronically available in late summer 2010. The report will summarize and provide a statewide perspective on the future of California state parks based on public's engagement in the visioning process, as well as reflect perspectives from key content experts, and what we can do to make that vision a reality.

For more information about the project or to contribute your thoughts, please contact:

Elizabeth Goldstein
President
California State Parks Foundation
50 Francisco Street, Ste. 110
San Francisco, CA 94133
elizabeth@calparks.org
415-262-4407

Ruskin Hartley
Executive Director
Save the Redwoods League
114 Sansome Street, Ste. 1200
San Francisco, CA 94104
rhartley@savetheredwoods.org
415-820-5821

California State Parks Foundation with 115,000 members is the only statewide independent nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting, enhancing and advocating for California's magnificent state parks. CSPF is committed to improving the quality of life for all Californians by expanding access to the natural beauty, rich culture and history, and recreational and educational opportunities offered by California's 278 state parks—the largest state park system in the United States. For more information about California's state parks, visit www.calparks.org.

Save the Redwoods League For more than 90 years, Save the Redwoods League has been dedicated to protecting the ancient redwood forests so all generations can experience the inspiration and majesty of redwoods. In 1850, there were nearly 2 million acres of ancient coast redwood forests in California. Today, less than 5 percent remains and faces threats from unsustainable logging practices, poorly planned development and global climate change. Since its founding in 1918, the League has protected more than 181,000 acres of land. For more information, visit SaveTheRedwoods.org.