



June 9, 2004

Subject: State Parks Trail Policy Review

Dear State Park Trail Enthusiasts:

California State Parks is striving to meet the increasing trail needs of the state's growing population within the limitations of land ownership, environmental constraints and budget realities. In 1950, 10 million people called California "home." Today 10 million people live just in Los Angeles County and more than 36 million people call California "home."

The pressures being placed on State Parks to provide recreation resources, such as trails, is destined to increase as the population races toward 50-plus million people by 2040. To put this into the context of available landmass for trails, there are 1.4 million acres in the entire California State Park System. A single National Forest—Plumas National Forest, located in Northern California—is nearly as large, containing 1.3 million acres.

Beginning in 2003, California State Parks' Management undertook the task of developing a Department Trails Policy. This was done in an effort to standardize the process for encouraging and allowing more trail users by determining the appropriate types of trail use (hiking, equestrian, mountain biking, etc.) that could be approved for each of the trails that comprise the 3,000 miles of trails within State Park units.

A copy of the final Trails Policy (and the interim Planning Template) is available for review at www.parks.ca.gov/trails. While developing and implementing departmental management policies does not require public review, we remain quite interested in hearing the thoughts of our trail users regarding the Trails Policy.

To help you understand why the policy is written as it is, the Trails Policy Committee offers the following insights: The Trails Policy...

- Is designed to ensure that active public participation is integral to determining the types of uses that specific trails within units of the State Park System can reasonably accommodate. This does not guarantee that such public involvement will override recommendations made by professional staff nor a superintendent's final decision, but ensures that public concerns and public support will be heard.
- Requires that multi-use always be a consideration, but not a requirement in the ultimate use decision—a decision that remains with the individual District Superintendents.
- Emphasizes the importance of park unit and regional trails planning and includes a planning template/guideline (also attached) that will become part of the *Trails Handbook*, the Department's standard for trail design, construction and maintenance. Absent the funding/staffing needs for implementing comprehensive park unit trail plans, the template will be used as a guide for determining the appropriate user types for individual trails within a park unit anytime changes in allowable trail use are being considered.
- Does not impose across-the-state standards such as speed limits, numbers and types of trail users allowed and seasonal closure needs because each trail is different and the types and numbers of users, levels of maintenance, original trail designs etc., are diverse and often continue to change.

Please submit your comments by July 9, 2004 to Ken McKowen, Statewide Trails Manager, California State Parks, PO Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001 or kmcko@parks.ca.gov. If you use the email address, please include "Trails Policy Comments" in your subject line.

Thank you for supporting California State Parks!!!

Sincerely,

Ken McKowen
Statewide Trails Manager