

Recreation

The Department's mission and legislative charge state a mandate to provide high quality recreational opportunities and experiences for the public. Recreation surveys have consistently shown that Californians feel that outdoor recreation areas, services, and facilities are essential to their quality of life.

Current Status

■ Visitor Perception

California State Parks plays both active and passive roles in the delivery of recreational experiences to visitors. Available activities include hiking, biking, camping, swimming, fishing, nature walks, boating, off-highway vehicle activities, and many others. Some activities are Department or volunteer sponsored, but most recreation in parks is simply through the visitors' independent enjoyment of the natural and cultural resources that are available in California State Parks.

The Department must balance a dual responsibility of resource protection and obligation to its visitors to provide the best opportunity for a quality recreational experience. The Department now has nine full years of data for key questions from the Visitor Satisfaction Survey. This information is critical in understanding the visitors' recreation needs.



Day-use visitors at San Clemente State Beach



Ranger and visitor at the falls in Russian Gulch State Park

Measurement Rationale

The measures for this outcome compare visitor perceptions to the actual services and opportunities that the Department delivers to the public. Performance levels target visitor satisfaction and meeting latent demand where possible. The components of successful measurement include:

- Visitor perception
- Visitor Attendance
- Accessibility



Ranger at Caswell Memorial State Park

■ Visitor Attendance

Attendance in state parks is affected by many factors, including weather, economic conditions and gasoline prices. During peak seasons when conditions are most favorable, many parks, especially campgrounds, reach capacity. This demonstrates that the demand for recreation far exceeds the number of parks locally available. During off-peak or “shoulder” seasons, demand is less, leaving opportunity for the Department to enhance programs attracting more visitation.

■ Accessibility

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits state and local agencies from discriminating against persons with disabilities and from excluding participation in or denying benefits of programs, services, or facilities to persons with disabilities.

Special funding earmarked for improvement of access to state park facilities and programs for recreation for people with disabilities is currently being allocated. The Department will then measure the results of actual recreational enhancement.

Measures

■ Visitor Perception

The results of three survey questions give insight into the level of visitor satisfaction with recreation—satisfaction with opportunity for recreational experience, satisfaction with the courtesy of staff, and satisfaction with fees charged compared with value received.



Playing in the sand at San Clemente State Beach

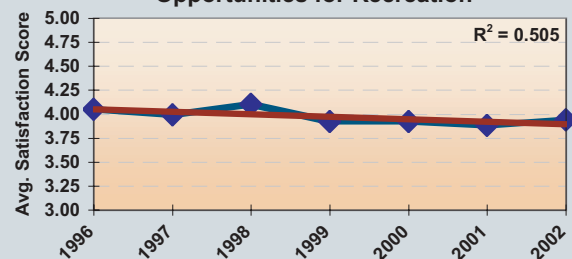


Rock climbing at Mount San Jacinto State Park

Data

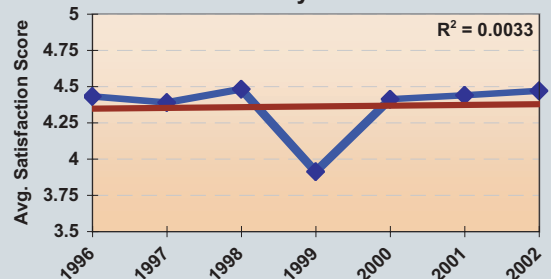
Visitor Perception

Opportunities for Recreation



Visitor survey data suggests a relatively stable trend of satisfaction with opportunity for recreation. Visitors rate satisfaction with the courtesy of park staff consistently very high. The data for 1999 requires further analysis due to the significant drop.

Courtesy of Staff



Opportunity for Recreational Experience

Data from the visitor survey reflects a stable, but gradual decline of satisfaction with opportunities for recreation. Data for State Recreation Areas only (not shown) shows a gradual increase in satisfaction.

Courtesy of Staff

Visitors consistently rate courtesy of staff very high. Comments from the visitor survey reflect overwhelming satisfaction with the treatment they receive from staff as they enter state parks and throughout their stay. Fiscal Year 1999 requires further analysis to understand this temporary dip in satisfaction.

Fees to Value

Data from the visitor survey reflects a significantly rising trend of satisfaction with fees paid compared to the value received in State Parks.

Visitor Attendance

Beginning in July 2000, entrance fees for most state parks were cut dramatically. Many were cut to half of the previous rates, as well as many premium fees which had been charged previously, being eliminated.

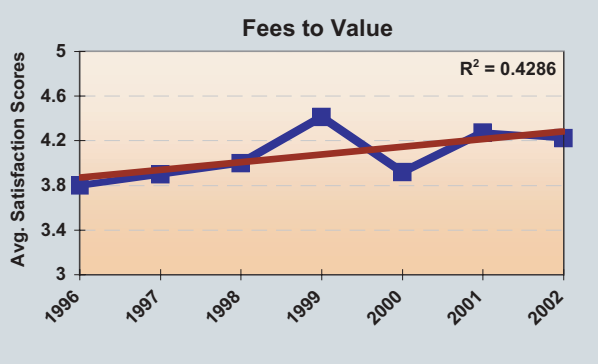
Results of the fee decrease are apparent in a significant rise in attendance rates corresponding to this time period. Overall paid attendance shows a continual increase, especially during the time of the fee decrease. Interestingly, free day-use attendance shows a similar increasing trend over time. However, the rise in camping attendance shows a less steep rise. This is due to the limited inventory of campgrounds which are often filled to capacity regardless of fees.



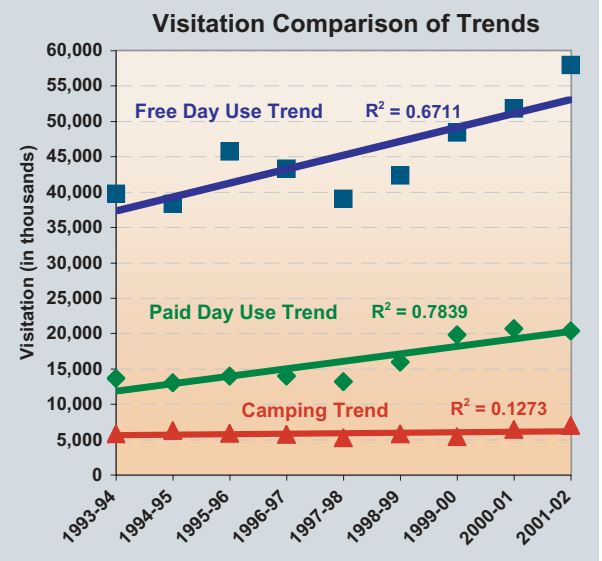
Kayaker participating in a PALS program



Paragliders at Thornton State Beach



Visitor survey data shows increases in satisfaction with fees paid compared to the value received. Comparisons of visitation trends show increased free and paid day use, while camping increases were smaller.



■ Accessibility

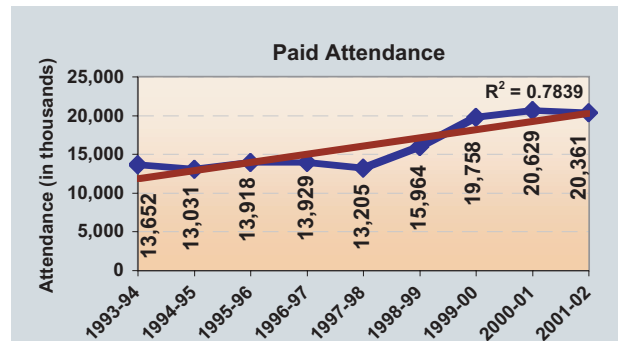
As a result of the ADA, the Department received special funding to enhance accessibility to parks. State Park planners are using the data gathered from accessibility surveys to forecast the extent to which recommended projects will enhance accessibility to recreational activities. The chart to the right depicts the estimated percent of these special funds that will be allocated to achieve outcomes of recreational enhancement in each of the eight categories listed. These activities are similar to the findings of *Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California, 1997*, pertaining to public support for state spending on recreational opportunity.



Visitors at San Elijo State Beach



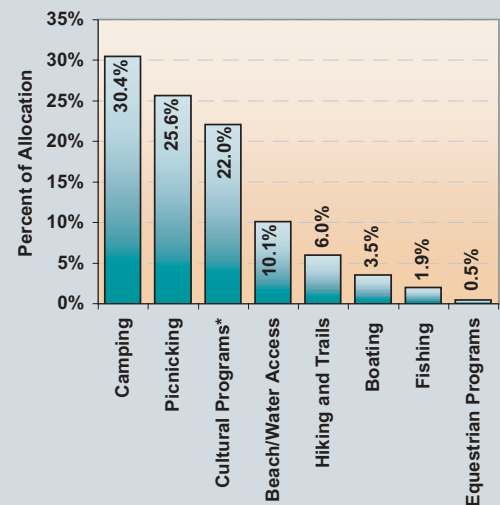
Windsurfing at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area



The chart above shows a sharp increase in paid attendance between fiscal years 1998/99 through 2001/02.

Below, camping, picnicking, and visiting museums lead priorities for accessibility enhancement of recreational programs.

Percent of special funds allocated to improve accessibility to recreation (by category)



* visiting museums, interpretive programs and exhibits

Visitor Comments on Recreation

From the California State Parks Visitor Survey 2000-2002

"We arrived to compete in the Gold Panning Championship, not knowing what to expect. We are delighted with the town and the way Larry Baumgarten arranged the event. World class."

Columbia State Historic Park, Summer 2000

Let's keep it simple — wild. There is more than enough activities right now. Horses, bikes, hiking, and minimal camping is plenty."

Mount Diablo State Park, Spring 2001

"A wonderful learning environment for children as well as a relaxing area for vacation/recreation activities! The campfire activities, museum tours and docent-led activities were outstanding!"

Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park, Summer 2000

"This is the most beautiful place I have ever stayed. The food was great. Your staff is the most helpful to friendly I have ever encountered. I look forward to my next opportunity to come back here."

Asilomar State Beach, Summer 2000

"Beautiful park! Enjoyed our visit, hiking and learning about the history of this area"

Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, Winter 2000

"I fly hang gliders here and it is one of the premier coastal sites in the world. Also great for surfing."

Marina State Beach, Fall 2001

"You need more money for parks and facilities. This is one thing I'm glad to pay taxes for."

Mount Tamalpais State Park, Fall 2000

"I first came as a little girl 70 years ago, I appreciate your TLC."

Weaverville Joss House State Historic Park, Spring 2002

"The hiking in Mt. Tam State Park is the best" year round hiking in the U.S.! To have this resource so close to a major urban area is absolutely unique and improves the quality of city life dramatically."

Mount Tamalpais State Park, Spring 2000

"Recreational activities like horse riding are extremely important to me. Riding on the beach gave us the opportunity to see the beach and landscape from a new perspective."

MacKerricher State Park, Spring 2000

We are here at least once a month for a picnic at the back end of the park, near start of East Ridge Trail. We love this place."

Armstrong Redwoods State Reserve, Spring 2000

"Plumas Eureka is a beautiful, well run park. It is family oriented with multiple activities. We have been coming here for 20 years and have never been disappointed. Junior Rangers was great for our kids, now 21 and 19."

Plumas Eureka State Park, Summer 2001

"Enjoyed ability to rent bikes. Hiking trails nice. Some easy water activities, rowboats, kayaks in harbor would be nice."

Angel Island SP, Summer 2002

"Litter getter program is excellent for kids, look forward to it every year."

Leo Carrillo State Park, Fall 2002

"Trails were well marked. Campsites clean and in good repair. Enjoyed the open meadow area, rather than turn every inch covered with sites. Excellent, friendly hosts and staff."

Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, Spring 2000