
Enhance and Develop Outreach Services to Underserved Communities, Initiative #9
(STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Develop and Solidify Meaningful Connection
and Relevancy to People)**Problem Statement**

There is a perception that California's state parks are less relevant to their current and potential visitor base as well as Californians overall. These perceptions may be due to any of the following observations:

- In 2010, voters soundly rejected Proposition 21, which would have enacted a license fee that would have provided free access to state parks and secured the Department's fiscal future.
- Most state park units are located in remote locations away from major urban areas.
- The ethnic composition of the state has changed dramatically over the past 20 years and seems to be very different from the ethnic composition of Department employees.
- Much of the state park system was developed for a different ethnic and social composition and existing facilities may not effectively cater to outdoor recreation needs or interpretive needs of these different groups.
- To visitors, a park is a park; they do not differentiate between city, regional, state, and federal parks and forests.
- Nationally, due to the influence of technology and media, there has been a social shift away from nature-based recreation since 1987.

If these perceptions are true, then the Department is in jeopardy of a continued decline in attendance, eroded budget support from stakeholders (both the public and legislature) and a potential long-term decline of advocacy for stewardship of the state's most important natural and cultural resources. Worse, the department risks a diminished ability to effectively fulfill its mission.

The Department currently offers many different types of structured programs aimed at specific audiences such as youth and underserved communities, as well as the public. Some programs are offered on a statewide basis, but not necessarily at every park (such as FamCamp, Junior Lifeguards, PORTS, and Junior Rangers), while others are regional or unit specific. Funding sources to implement and facilitate these programs vary.

Currently, the Department does not have an organized method to collectively implement, monitor, or evaluate programs, which leads to the inability to tailor program delivery and outreach to best serve the public. Since the Department cannot accurately communicate the effectiveness of programs offered, impacts are diluted and perceptions persist regarding the department's lack of relevancy. Interpretation, Outreach and Recruitment are typically the first to be cut during lean budget years. However, these programs should be considered essential to the future viability of the Department.

Achieving “Relevancy” would mean that all people value parks and California State Parks in particular are an essential component to their individual health, inspiration and education as well as that of society.

Initiative Description

Initially, the committee will survey who comes to parks, and then determine what segments of our population are “underserved.” These segments could include (but are not limited to) certain ethnic and cultural groups; populations in specific geographic locations (particularly urban areas); and people in certain socio-economic categories, ability levels, and age groups.

The team will develop and begin to implement proposals that will increase the relevancy of the State Park System to all Californians and beyond. These may include:

- Expanding current programs
- Creating new outreach programs
- Improving accessibility to state parks

Anticipated Benefits of this Initiative

As we improve the relevancy of the State Park System, the Department:

- Will better fulfill its mission.
- May see a direct increase in funding through attendance revenue.
- May see an indirect increase in funding support as relevancy translates into increased legislative and voter support.

Anticipated Implementation Challenges and Data Needed

The statement that State Parks does not attract diverse populations or is available to urban dwellers is largely anecdotal. Future decisions must be data-driven. Therefore, we need to understand State Park System use and the level of accessibility.

It will be difficult to correlate the impact of programmatic changes with relevancy and a shift in societal perspectives toward the valuation of parks. Changing societal norms is a long process and some variables cannot be pre-determined.

Process

1. People

- Committee members
 - Sean Woods(co-chair) - Superintendent, Los Angeles Sector
 - Michaele DeBoer (co-chair) - Superintendent, Office of Community Involvement
 - Clay Phillips – Superintendent (ret.), San Diego Coast District
 - Ellen Clark – Statewide Volunteer Coordinator, Interpretation and Education Division
 - Jared Zucker - Associate Government Program Analyst, Boating and Waterways Division
 - Cultural Resources representative

- Partnership representative
- Key participants (or participating organizations)
 - TBD
 - TBD
 - TBD

2. Initial Tasks

a. General Data Collection

- i. Collect demographic projections for the state.
- ii. Determine the degree of relevancy, past and current.
- iii. Determine the proximity of state parks to California's population centers and analyze the degree to which the parks are accessible.

b. Develop Overall Strategy

- i. Determine Target Populations -Who are our "underserved" populations for whom the State Park System needs to become more relevant?
- ii. Develop a cohesive or articulated strategy for outreach and engagement to underserved communities that may integrate all of the following components:

c. Expand Current Programs / Create New Programs

- iii. Survey current programs and services intended to engage underserved communities in State Parks.
- iv. Develop strategies to increase the services provided by existing relevant programs and take them to a larger statewide scale.
- v. Identify new projects and programs that will increase participation of underserved community members in State Parks.
- vi. Need to determine the role of partnerships in implementing programs.
- vii. Determine staff and other resource considerations (such as Technology, training centers, amphitheaters, FamCamp trailers, etc.) for program implementation.
- viii. Examine the current BILS manual to determine if we have incorporated culturally relevant programming to our Interpretive Framework. Bi or multi -lingual literature, signage and programming also must be mentioned.
- ix. Culturally relevant interpretation—bilingual flyers, signage, interpreters, etc.
- x. Improve program implementation to include all phases of recreation: anticipation, experience, and recollection.
- xi. Expand the Interpretive Themes provided within existing park properties where such expansion would be relevant to underserved communities. One of the primary missions of the State Park System is to tell the grand story of California. It does this well, yet there are many important themes that are unique to California story, that are absent from the State Park System. Many of these components may be more likely to attract

underserved groups. The State Park System could expand to tell many stories that are iconic for the state and occur within existing park properties. These could include:

1. The Birth and Growth of Information Technology and the Digital Age
2. Hollywood and the Center of the Worldwide Entertainment Industry
3. The Central Valley, Breadbasket to the World
4. Social Justice for Migrant Workers
5. California Vineyards
6. Earthquakes
7. The U.S / Mexico Border, the busiest and most controversial border in the world
8. The Birth of the Surf Culture (surfing, boogie boarding, bikinis and tans)
9. Alternative Energy
10. 1960s Free Love

d. Improve Accessibility

- xii. Explore how the public transit system could assist in increasing park usage.

e. Improve Marketing - Determine how to market programs effectively to target populations.

- i. Better OGALs marketing...more credit.
- ii. Why did prop 21 fail in park-rich communities?

f. Change Department Processes and Internal Culture

- i. Limited ability to hire locally, particularly in urban areas
- ii. Limited staff recruitment effort
- iii. Encourage human resource diversity, particularly for outreach program delivery.
- iv. Mission inflexibility—a narrow interpretation of the State Parks mission
- v. Establish a recruitment office sensitive to demographics.
- vi. Identify management practices to encourage unstructured leisure that balances the mission and a more accurate representation of public need.

3. Anticipated Deliverable(s)

4. Glossary
Relevancy
PORTS
FamCamp