



# News Release

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## California State Parks Recognizes Excellence in Employees and Partners

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California State Parks Director Lisa Mangat honored selected department staff and partners at the annual Director’s Recognition Awards Ceremony held in Sacramento today.

“We want to recognize our public servants and partners who are committed to expanding and enhancing the visitor experience by means of an enthusiastic, results-oriented spirit of creativity and innovation,” said Director Lisa Mangat. “These individuals represent the very best of state parks, and show the strong commitment to excellence and accountability.”

This year’s award recipients include:

### Olmsted Award - Leadership and Vision

- **Office of Grants and Local Services, Sacramento:** OGALS recognized and acknowledged that neighborhoods understand their own community needs. Therefore, they changed the grant-processing customs to address these needs. Local agencies and area residents were resistant to the new approach. After seeing the success of the program, local agencies reported to OGALS on their plans to use this public-engagement formula for their own future community building projects. Input from local area residents documented that with the new process “they felt government had connected with them positively for the first time.” Through OGALS’ strong leadership and engagement with neighborhood youth, seniors and families, millions of Californians now benefit from the conversion of their previously hard urban landscapes into open, public park spaces.

### Hill Award - Inspiration

- **Michael G. Lynch, Ranger/Retired Annuitant, Placer:** Mike was the driving force behind California State Park’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorations held during 2014.



Mike's down-to-earth style and his professionalism as a long-time State Park Ranger connected thousands of park users to the California State Park System. The results of his work in the identification and recognition of California's state park history will last far beyond just the sesquicentennial year.

### **Drury Award - Professional Integrity**

- **Vincent Cicero, Senior Environmental Scientist, San Luis Obispo:** Vince has used diplomatic communication and professional, scientific analysis to protect natural resources and public open space. For years, he has worked diligently to bring together opposing viewpoints to address environmental concerns and philosophy finding an intricate balance between preservation and use in our popular San Luis Obispo coast parks. Vince's approach in integrating park natural resource policies into controversial subjects has proven invaluable.

### **Mott Award - Innovation**

- **Web Team Modernization Project, Sacramento:** The web team implemented a new, modern, mobile-friendly California State Parks public website, making it accessible to more users than ever before. The team added multiple levels of design and functionality. Subsequently, the department is now able to target new demographics. Team members include: Adam Lum, Kelly Thorn and Oscar Vasquez.

### **Dewitt Award - Partnership**

- **Humboldt County Office of Education (HCOE), Humboldt:** HCOE integrated its educational mission with the North Coast Redwoods Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students Program (PORTS) to help overcome educational barriers among a large population of low-income students on the rural north coast. They loaned equipment, funded technology startup and upgrade costs, to give their classrooms access to the wonders of California's state parks through PORTS, in programs focused on topics such as redwood ecology and salmon life cycles.
- **Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC), San Francisco:** ETC has been instrumental in partnering with California State Parks to provide accessible, educational, and life-changing outdoor adventures for more than 60,000 people with disabilities and economically disadvantaged youth in California. ETC members conduct adaptive river-rafting and sea-kayaking programs with overnight stays. Participant programs also include camping and cross-country skiing.

### **Ingenuity Award**

- **Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Campfire Center Renovation Team, Monterey:** The team integrated modern needs with historic aesthetics to give park visitors authentic interpretive campfires. Team members include: Patricia Clark-Gray, Sara Arnett, Matthew C. Bischoff, Joan Carpenter, Jeffrey D. Frey, Christopher J. Fridrich, Delane Hurley, Robin McManaman, Larry Tierney, Michael J. Zuccaro, Mr. Martin Slanina of Monterey Bay Construction and Mr. Joshua Towne of Better Presentation Systems.



- **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Stout Research Center Sand-Mammoth Excavation Project Team:** The team was instrumental in the planning and excavation of a partial mammoth skeleton and tusks, including its 4,000-pound skull, in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. In addition to the mammoth extraction, these volunteers have given extraordinary amounts of their time, talents and scientific knowledge to the state park. Team members included: Lyndon K. Murray, Ph.D., Project Manager/District Paleontologist, and volunteers Sandra and Robert Keeley and Linda and John Gilbert.

**Special Commendations:**

- **Larry Felton, Senior State Archaeologist/Retired Annuitant, Sacramento:** As one of the department’s most talented and well-respected archaeologists, Larry was instrumental in developing and implementing the department’s digital data-management system used to manage its cultural resources.
- **Louis P. Nastro, Assistant to the California Parks and Recreation Commission, Sacramento:** For 10 years, Louis’ professionalism and commitment to the department’s mission have been illustrated through his planning and administratively managing California State Park and Recreation Commission meetings. His constant professionalism in satisfying the needs of the commission and the public in order to institute the work of the commission is commendable.
- **PORTS, Sacramento:** PORTS is celebrating its tenth year—having served more than a quarter of a million students in California, helping them understand and appreciate their natural and cultural environment through online units of study during live, interactive educational videoconference programs. By using technology to reach urban and rural underrepresented students, PORTS park interpreters are on the cutting edge of California State Parks, connecting state parks system’s inherent values with a whole new generation. Program staff include: Casey Dexter-Lee, Jennifer Dandurand, Jennifer Langer, Vonnie Lemke, Rich Levin, Leslie Minium, Philip McDonald, Rhiannon Sims, Ryan Spencer and LuAnn Thompson.
- **Maria C. Ripani, Communications Dispatcher, Sacramento:** Maria helped save a life during a time when she was the lone operator in the dispatch center, covering calls throughout several counties in northern California. In 2014, she received a call from a suicidal gentleman, and was able to keep him on the line in conversation for 45 minutes. All the while, she juggled other dispatch calls throughout the region. She gently kept him talking until she could persuade him to disclose his whereabouts. Maria was then able to dispatch help to the caller and avert a suicide. Maria has always shown calmness, professionalism, generosity, and dedication – and on this day she was especially heroic.
- **Victoria Yturalde, Staff Park and Recreation Specialist, Sacramento:** Victoria and her team gave visibility for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of California State Parks through artistic publications and graphics to create high-quality informative products.



## **Special Act/Special Service Awards:**

- **Christopher S. Hoffman, Park Aide, Los Angeles:** Chris rescued two children and one adult from drowning when he was off-duty and camping with friends at Thornhill-Broome State Beach. A 10-year-old girl and an 8-year-old boy were swept out into the ocean on a day when big waves were crashing on the shoreline. The father had gone into the water in an attempt to help. If Chris had not acted heroically, all three lives may have been lost on that afternoon.
- **Daniel Perata, Ranger, Los Angeles:** Ranger Peralta rescued an Amber-alert kidnapped child near Hungry Valley State Vehicle Recreation Area. His insight, and bravery, in light of the man's arrest for numerous serious felonies is commended.
- **Stephen Williams, Park Maintenance Worker I, San Bernardino:** Stephen rescued a drowning woman on Labor Day 2014, when he jumped into Cleghorn Swim Beach Area at Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area and pulled her limp body from eight feet below the lake's surface.

The Director's Recognition Awards Program is a statewide program that recognizes exceptional and outstanding accomplishments in employees and partners that model behaviors that further the mission, goals and core values of California State Parks. For more information, please visit the department's website at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

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*For more than two years, California has been dealing with the effects of drought. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit [Drought.CA.Gov](http://Drought.CA.Gov).*

*Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com).*

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### **California State Parks Mission**

*To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation.*

