

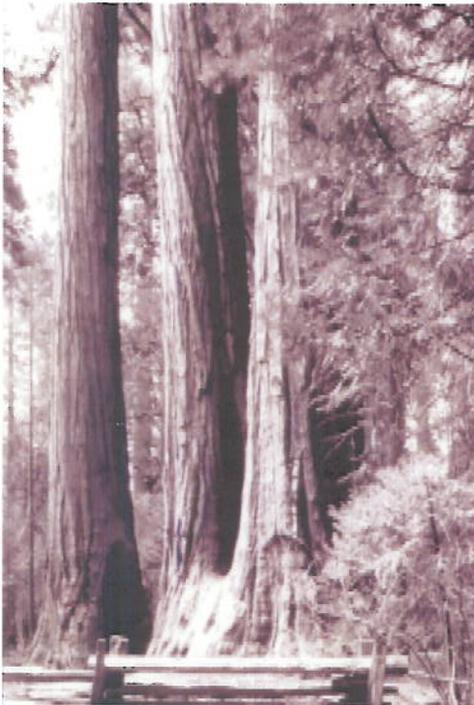
A STATE PARK SYSTEM IS BORN

In the decades before California had an organized environmental movement, few foresaw the day when the state's northern coastal ranges would no longer be blanketed with redwood forests. With alarming speed, entire mountainsides of ancient forests were felled. New cities bustling with business and industry and fueled by the riches of California's abundant deposits of gold and silver were erupting on the landscape. It appeared to many that the bounty of this rich land was without end.

But some Californians saw things differently. Yosemite became a state trust in 1864 and was later to be a National Park. In the 1880s, Ralph Sidney Smith, editor and manager of the *Redwood City Times and Gazette*, began to enlighten his readers about the need to preserve part of California's unique redwood forests. Unfortunately, Smith's life was cut short, but he had already planted the seed that would ultimately reach fruition as California's first redwood state park. His crusade was picked up and carried on by other prominent Californians such as photographer Andrew P. Hill, by members of the new, yet influential Sempervirens Club, and by the dozens of writers who promoted the idea of preserving the best of California forever. Heated political battles finally brought compromise and passage of a bill authorizing state funds for the purchase of redwood property in Santa Cruz County. Governor Henry T. Gage signed the bill on March 16, 1901. The following year, the newly

appointed California Redwood Park Commission approved acquisition of the first 2,500 acres in Big Basin at a cost of \$100 per acre.

The actions of turn-of-the-century citizens and lawmakers to preserve islands of California's most valuable lands for future generations put the Golden State in the forefront of the preservation movement. Unlike national parks, state parks such as Big Basin and Humboldt Redwoods did not have to prove economically useless to any mining, timber, or grazing interests before being granted park status. Further, unlike newly-established western national parks, which were already on federally-owned land, most California parkland purchases were from private owners.



Calaveras Big Trees State Park

Much of the early interest in preserving California's history grew from a world-wide fascination with the Gold Rush. In 1890, California created its first official historical landmark—a statue of James Marshall overlooking his 1848 gold discovery site near Coloma. Three years later, Sutter's Fort was dedicated as a state historic monument and was opened to the public.

The Native Sons of the Golden West and the Native Daughters of the Golden West, working with other preservation-minded organizations, were instrumental in raising money and securing the cooperation of the Legislature to identify and create state historic monuments.

Their successes included the Monterey Custom House, the Pioneer Monument (Donner Memorial), San Pasqual Battlefield, the Bear Flag Monument in historic Sonoma Plaza, and General Vallejo's Petaluma Adobe. Some of these efforts to preserve California's history took years to reach fruition and cost many thousands of dollars.



Monterey State Historic Park

Control of the state's historic monuments remained with independent boards and commissions until 1921. Today, the State Historical Resources Commission conforms to standards established under the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act as well as the Public Resources Code. Responsibility for state and federal historic preservation programs now rests with the Office of Historic Preservation. Before 1927, no comprehensive plan existed for preserving California's recreational, natural, and cultural treasures. However, with leadership from the Save-the-Redwoods League, a broad coalition of groups and individuals threw their collective powers into a new campaign for a state park bill. The new bill swiftly gained the unanimous approval of the Legislature and was signed into law by Governor C. C. Young, to take effect in 1927.

The following year, a newly-established State Park Commission began gathering support for the first state park bond issue. Their efforts were rewarded in 1928 when Californians voted nearly three to one in favor of a \$6 million park bond act. In addition, Frederick Law Olmstead completed a statewide survey of potential parklands that defined basic long-range goals and provided guidance for the acquisition and development of state parks. With Newton Drury serving as acquisition officer, the new system of state parks began to grow rapidly.

In January 1929, when California had only a dozen state parks and five historic monuments valued at one million dollars, John D. Rockefeller donated one million dollars for acquisition of old growth redwoods in what would become Humboldt Redwoods State Park. He then offered another \$1 million to be matched by other private donors. During the next two years, lands for many of the most beautiful and famous state parks were acquired through a combination of private donations or purchased with money from the 1928 bond issue. These included D. L. Bliss, Mount San Jacinto, Calaveras Big Trees, Mount Diablo, Del Norte Coast Redwoods, Mount Tamalpais, and Cuyamaca Rancho State Parks. Coastal areas included San Clemente, Doheny, Point Lobos, Seacliff, Sunset, Carpinteria, and Silver Strand State Beaches.

The first 50 years of state park history were marked by enormous growth in parklands and facilities. Even during the recession of the 1930s, parklands were acquired. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided work for architects, manual laborers, and historians in developing many state parks.

After World War II, there was a tremendous increase in demand for recreational facilities. During the next decade, 24 new beaches and parks costing \$10 million were acquired. In 1951, Newton Drury became Director of the California Division of Beaches and Parks. During his tenure, much of the State Park System's share of offshore oil royalties, which had been suspended in 1947, began to flow once again. When Drury retired in 1959, at age 70, the California State Park System was composed of 150 beaches, parks, and historic monuments, covering 615,000 acres.

During the 1960s, there emerged intense public interest in preserving California's wildlands from encroaching development. By a 1.5 million-vote plurality, Californians approved a \$150 million bond act in 1964, allowing acquisition of new state parklands including Point Mugu and Sugar Pine Point State Parks. The 1960s were also a time of change in the structure and hierarchy of the State Park System. In 1961, under Director Charles DeTurk, the old Division



Plumas-Eureka State Park

of Beaches and Parks merged with the Division of Recreation and the Division of Small Craft Harbors.

William Penn Mott, Jr. became Director in 1967, and vowed a new era of growth even though faced with gubernatorial budget cuts and hiring freezes. Mott successfully transformed the Division of Beaches and Parks into the Department of Parks and Recreation. With the formation of the Department came a shift to

management of more active recreation facilities. The development of the Central Valley Project created reservoirs providing recreational opportunities to be managed by the new Department. During this same period, the separate Park Commission and Recreation Commission were merged into a nine-member State Park and Recreation Commission. The functions of the Department were centralized, with district staff positions moved to headquarters. Individual parks were grouped under area managers who, in turn, reported to district superintendents.

A mandate to acquire and operate state recreation areas and facilities was provided in 1974 when the people of California approved Proposition 1, a \$250 million state park bond issue. By the end of the decade, the California State Park System had 500 miles of lake shoreline, 87 miles of river frontage, 200 miles of coastline, 14,000 campsites, and 1,500 miles of riding and hiking trails. Historical units included missions, forts, the gold discovery site at Coloma, Hearst San Simeon, Jack London's home, Bidwell Mansion, and many more. In addition, an entire new division, the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division, was added to the Department. Bonds which assisted the growth of State Parks also passed in 1976 and 1980.

In 1983, a comprehensive report of the threats to natural and scenic values of the State Park System was completed. This report, *Stewardship 1983*, led to funding for major resource management efforts. Between 1984 and 1993, \$21 million was expended through the Natural Heritage Stewardship and Statewide Resource Management programs, resulting in restoration and protection of California's diverse natural and cultural heritage.

California State Parks represents the most diverse natural and cultural heritage holdings of any land managing agency in California. These lands support a stunning array of the state's landscape provinces, environmentally sensitive habitat areas, threatened species, ancient Native American sites, and historic facilities. With almost a third of California's magnificent coastline under its care, California State Parks manages the state's finest coastal wetlands, estuaries, and dune systems. At the same time, the demands of more than 33 million Californians for recreational opportunities are increasing.

Over 70 million visits annually were made to California's state parks in recent years, most occurring between mid-May and mid-September. This caused stress to the infrastructure of the Department, an infrastructure supported by an archaic bureaucratic structure which was slow in responding to the needs of the citizens it served. Districts reported to Regions, which, in turn, reported to Sacramento Headquarters.



Candlestick Point State Recreation Area

It was in this context that the Department established the Phoenix Committee to evaluate the structure of California State Parks and to make recommendations for change. The Phoenix Committee's sweeping recommendations were fully implemented. A layer of the Department's reporting structure (Regions) was eliminated, and the 55 Districts were consolidated into 23. Along with the consolidation came delegated responsibility, which allowed the Districts to immediately respond to the needs of their constituency. Modern business management practices were implemented soon after the reorganization was completed.

These efforts were recognized in 1994, 1995, and 1997 when California State Parks became the first state agency to be awarded the coveted Eureka Award for Quality and Service. The awards were milestones for the Department and demonstrate that government can be responsive to the people, effectively measure and carry out its mission, and continually improve its processes.

From 1994 to 1997, the Department reassessed its entire operation and structure. It identified its core programs and adopted performance-based budgeting as a means of managing performance. California State Parks was one of four state agencies that were allowed to adopt this budgeting process as part of a statewide pilot. In addition, several units within the Department were transferred to local jurisdictions as part of its operational assessment. At the same time, critical parklands such as Gray Whale Ranch in Santa Cruz

County and the coastal areas of Limekiln State Park in Monterey County, were added to the State Park System. Today, there are 266 units within the State Park System.

During this same period, volunteerism hit an all-time high with 14,000 volunteers annually providing nearly one million hours of time to California State Parks. Interpretation and education remain core programs within the Department as it meets its commitment to ***The Seventh Generation***.

With the election of Governor Gray Davis in 1998 and the resulting appointment of Rusty Areias as Director, California State Parks received positive support and attention from the new Administration and the State Legislature. As an example,

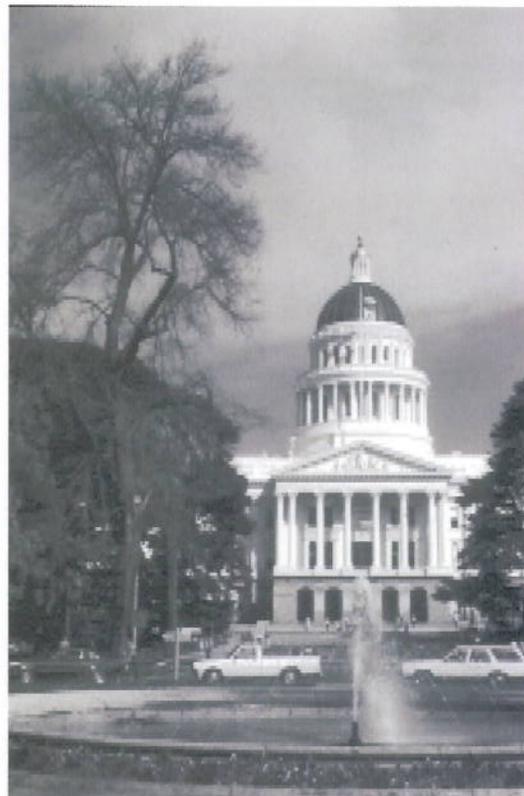


Sutter's Fort State Historic Park

funds for maintenance of the state park infrastructure, which had been neglected for a decade, were made available at record levels. The Department also refined its performance management system in 1999 and became the first government agency to receive a coveted Arthur Andersen Best Practices Award. California State Parks began the 21st century with 266 park units, nearly 300 miles of coastline, 625 miles of lake and river frontage, 15,200 campsites, 3,000 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails, and 450 miles of off-highway vehicle trails on nearly 1.3 million acres. In 2000, the people of California overwhelmingly passed the largest state park bond in the nation's history (\$2.1 billion) to support California's growing need for park and recreation services. In recognition of its leadership role in historic preservation, State Parks was invited to join the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Getty Trust in sponsoring the national 2000 Preservation Conference. California State Parks entered the 21st century with new challenges and significant support to meet those challenges.

Statute

The legal charter of California State Parks, as required by the Public Resources Code, and the California Code of Regulations, among others, calls for it to: "...administer, protect, provide for recreational opportunity, and develop the State Park System; to interpret the values of the State Park System to the public; to operate the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Program; to administer the California Historical Resources Protection Program; and to administer federal and state grants and bond funds to local agencies."



California State Capitol