

SECTION ONE - INTRODUCTION

COOPERATING ASSOCIATIONS PROGRAM MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

Mission

The mission of cooperating associations is to further the educational and interpretive activities of the State Department of Parks and Recreation.

Objectives

To aid the State of California in conserving and interpreting the units of the State Department of Parks and Recreation for the benefit of the public.

To sponsor, publish, purchase, and distribute or sell appropriate maps and literature, illustrative materials, and other items which increase visitor understanding and appreciation of State Park System values and purposes.

To acquire materials, equipment, and other items for use in the educational and interpretive programs of the parks.

To sponsor, support, and assist docent programs, environmental educational activities, resource management projects in support of such programs, seminars, and lectures and other activities that contribute to the educational and interpretive programs of the parks.

To plan, organize, and implement fundraising programs to acquire contributions to support the interpretive and educational activities of the parks.

To assist in establishment of similar cooperating associations in the State Department of Parks and Recreation.

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THE COOPERATING ASSOCIATIONS PROGRAM MANUAL (CAPM)

The CAPM deals with policy and guidelines relating to cooperating associations, i.e., non-profit corporations having contractual agreements with the State Department of Parks and Recreation. The purpose of the CAPM is to provide information and guidance to department personnel through a detailed program description and related rules, regulations, and procedures that apply to it. Program operation guidelines are included to help associations and park personnel plan, implement, and operate a successful program.

Periodic review of the program will ensure compliance with state and federal regulations relating to non-profit corporations, and ensure that program activities are consistent with the department's mission. The major concerns to be addressed by periodic review of this program include:

Ongoing appraisal of department policy as it affects management of these programs.

Mechanisms to ensure that program management is consistent with policies specified in the department's Administrative Manual (DAM) and Operations Manual (DOM).

Compliance with state and federal requirements.

In this manual, all sections are official department policy, except for sections identified as "guidelines."

The CAPM is a dynamic document, and will change as the Cooperating Association Program evolves. After this document has been in use for one year, we will again request department staff and cooperating association comments and suggestions. With this in mind, the following form is provided for your convenience.

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Cooperating Associations Program Manual Review

Name of Reviewer

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COOPERATING ASSOCIATIONS PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Cooperating Associations are public benefit non-profit corporations under contract to the State Department of Parks and Recreation. They are formed to support and further the department's interpretive and educational services to park visitors. The associations accomplish this by sponsoring, publishing, purchasing, distributing, or selling appropriate items which increase visitor understanding and appreciation of State Park System values and purposes. They may also receive funds from donations, membership dues, admissions to special events, and other park-related activities.

There are eighty-four non-profit corporations in the department's program.

Through the efforts of these associations, nearly four million dollars are raised annually.

The associations collectively have a membership in excess of 20,000. Six-thousand association members annually provide 450,000 hours of volunteer service to the department as non-paid state employees.

Volunteer service contributed by association members, in interpretation, represents the equivalent of 250 full-time staff positions providing services to visitors of the State Park System. This represents a net savings to the department in personnel services of about five million dollars annually.

The Cooperating Association Program represent a nine-million-dollar value to the department through the funds raised and volunteer services provided by the membership.

Total volunteer activities in the state parks, (i.e., The Cooperating Association Program, Scouting, Camp Host, mounted assistance units, Trail Days, beach clean-up days, etc.), represents an annual value in excess of ten million dollars.

The people of California are indebted to cooperating associations and their memberships. Without their support over the last twenty years, the State Department of Parks and Recreation would not have been able to provide the level of service which visitors to the State Park System have grown to expect. The department is truly appreciative of the support and assistance received in furthering its interpretive goals.

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COOPERATING ASSOCIATIONS PROGRAM

Background

The California State Parks Cooperating Associations Program began in 1971. The first associations officially established were at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the Santa Cruz Mountains Area State Parks, and Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park. The department's program is partly founded on the National Park Service (NPS) model which established the Yosemite Natural History Association in the 1920s, and Public Law 633, enacted by the US Congress in 1946 -- however, there were significant differences. Our program also included elements of a separate NPS program, the Volunteers in Parks Program. The NPS never intermingled volunteers with associations. In our program, volunteers, in most cases, were also members of an association.

The California State Parks Cooperating Associations Program was designed originally to support and further the department's interpretive and educational activities. Another primary objective was to raise funds for the State Park System. At the time, there was no intention to have cooperating associations carry out interpretive programs or coordinate volunteers.

Since that time, however, many cooperating associations have established interpretive programs which, in some cases, have become the principal activity of the associations. Interpretive program development and management is at the very heart of many association activities. As the time available to park staff for interpretive activities and volunteer coordination is severely limited, they've grown to depend on the association's members to perform many of these functions. Associations have recruited and trained docents, and staffed visitor centers and historic sites. In many instances when docents are not present, the sites are generally not open to the public. The docents conduct tours, facilitate visits to the park unit by school groups, the elderly, and the physically challenged. The volume of association work has grown to the point where some associations found it necessary to hire part or full-time staff to coordinate these activities. As a result, some confusion arose as to who was responsible for coordinating volunteers and interpretive programs.

Cooperating Association Task Force (CATF)

A Cooperating Association Task Force (CATF) was formed to conduct a review and offer recommendations for program improvement. It was also charged with clarifying the appropriate roles and responsibilities of the department, the cooperating associations, and the volunteers. This manual is a result of the task force's efforts.

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Role Of Nonprofit Corporations

While it is understood that the cooperating associations are volunteer organizations, in that they have voluntary boards of directors, and that the members are volunteers, the structural relationship between the department and the associations is that of a state agency and a nonprofit corporation. By definition, cooperating associations are non-profit public benefit corporations established to aid the interpretive and educational activities of the park system units which they have been designated to serve. Within this definition, the role of these nonprofit corporations is to further the interpretive and educational programs of the department. In many instances, this has been broadly interpreted to mean coordination of volunteers involved in interpretive program presentation. This was never the intent of the program. The intent was to raise money to support educational and interpretive programs that the department, due to budgetary constraints, could not adequately fund.

Volunteer Coordination And Liability Protection

Since DPR must designate volunteers as non-paid employees and provide workers' compensation and tort liability protection, it is clearly the responsibility of the department to coordinate volunteer activities.

Members of cooperating associations are frequently also volunteers. It is important that the distinction between association sponsorship of programs and actual program delivery is understood both by cooperating associations and volunteers. Program development or management is the responsibility of the state. Ultimate responsibility for interpretive programs in a park rests with the district superintendent. Frequently, this responsibility will be handled through delegation to volunteers (non-paid state employees) who are also members of a cooperating association.

In order to provide liability and workers' compensation coverage to individual association members, it must be understood that when performing interpretive activities and related volunteer coordination, it must be accomplished in the context of non-paid state employees. This distinction is critical to protect the corporation and its board of directors from workers' compensation and tort liability exposure.

When a non-profit corporation hires paid employees, volunteer coordination may not be handled by those individuals while they are functioning as employees of the corporation. However, if these individuals are also volunteers to the state, the district superintendent may delegate coordination responsibilities to them as non-paid state employees. Technically the corporation is donating the services of its employees to the department. Such an arrangement is similar to a loaned executive program where corporations assign employees to provide assistance to other organizations.

Because association interpretive programs were not anticipated in the original planning, questions have arisen as to whether such activities are appropriate for the associations. If two important requirements are met, cooperating associations may continue to develop, coordinate, and administer interpretive programs.

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(1) It must be understood that the ultimate responsibility for approval of interpretive programs rests with DPR. Association interpretive programs are thus subject to review and approval by appropriate department personnel.

(2) It must be understood that association members, when participating in interpretive activities, are functioning as non-paid state employees. This is necessary to provide workers' compensation and tort liability protection to individuals, and to isolate the association from this risk.

Because the state is self-insured, the department can better provide this protection. The costs associated with this protection would be prohibitive, and also an unnecessary expense to an association.

Workers' Compensation coverage will be provided by the state (see Volunteers In Parks Program Manual for further details). In order for such coverage to be provided, a DPR 208, Volunteer Record and Service Agreement, with Form Std. 689, Oath of Allegiance, on the reverse side must be completed and approved prior to the effective date of coverage.