

BEAR FACTS

Planning Trends and Information from California State Parks

June 2003

Park Visitors Support Morro Bay's Economy

Park planners and managers have often touted the benefits of parks to local economies. Recently, at the urging of State Park Superintendent Joe Mette, researchers from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo embarked on an economic impact study to get definitive answers about how the more than one million visitors to Morro Bay State Park contribute tourism dollars to the city of Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo County. Cal Poly faculty members Bill Hendricks, Teresa Love and Lynn Hamilton led the effort.

From June 2000 through June 2002, park visitors participated in contact interviews on randomly selected days in the Morro Bay campground. The initial interviews were followed with a mail-back questionnaire that resulted in 1,585 responses (72.34%). The survey included information on age, income, group size and composition, education, sex, and principal residence. In addition, data were collected regarding travel distance, nights stayed, type of camping, recreational activities, visitor motivation, amenity resources, place attachment, and expenditures in the city of Morro Bay and the county of San Luis Obispo.

The economic findings were impressive. For annual income, 49.8% earned \$50,000 per year or more. Most impressively, over a quarter of campers made \$100,000 or more:

- ◆ 26.2% - \$100,000 or more;
- ◆ 11.4% - \$60,000 to \$69,000
- ◆ 12.2% - \$50,000 to \$59,000

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Planners Grapple with Coastal Erosion

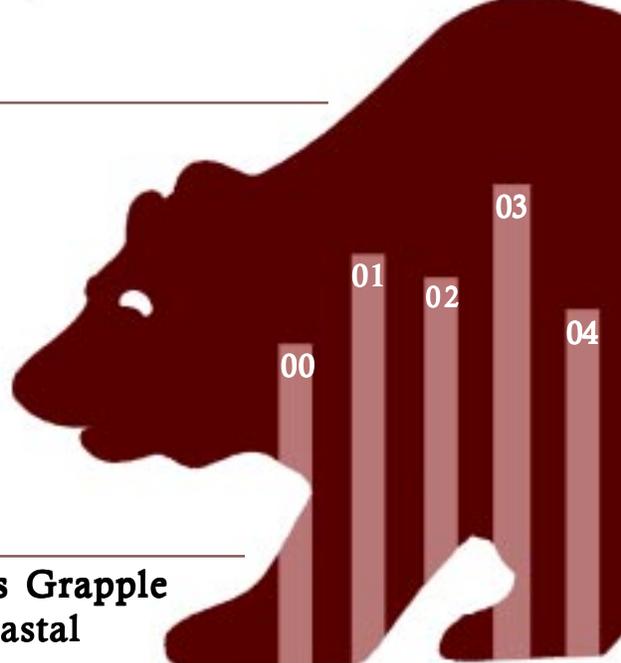
Park planners and resource managers have a difficult time dealing with coastal erosion and its impacts on park facilities and cultural and natural resources. State Parks is responsible for over one quarter (285 miles) of California's expansive scenic coastline, including rocky headlands, graceful coves, steep cliffs, rolling dunes, and wide sandy beaches.

While some State Park facilities have been designed to deflect coastal erosion damage, in other parks the solutions are more elusive. In the San Diego Coast District, portable lifeguard towers were built to be pulled back in the winter months to avoid winter storm damage. But at South Carlsbad State Beach, cliff-face erosion is actively undermining a shop building and threatening portions of the campground. Up and down the coastline, land is being lost:

- ◆ A city street at Asilomar State Beach is threatened by erosion.
- ◆ A Refugio State Beach roadway has been reduced to one lane.
- ◆ A damaged Leo Carrillo State Beach parking lot will be reduced in size and moved back rather than re-constructed in the wave hazard zone.

Managing cultural resources in the face of coastal erosion is also challenging and complicated. For example, at the San Miguel Campground at Carpinteria State Beach, an historic dump is being undermined and materials are falling onto the beach. The site may have been used successively

(continued on page 2)



(Morro Bay, continued)

And when it comes to local spending 65.5% of campers ate at Morro Bay restaurants and 62.1% went shopping during their state park visit. Total expenditures for the 9,357 people represented in the survey responses were an average of \$80.30 spent per visitor.

Using an economic model to analyze data, the direct impact to the county over the two years was nearly \$14 million. With indirect and induced effects included, the economic activity increased to \$20.2 million. An estimated 365 jobs were generated in the City of Morro Bay from park visitors' expenditures.

It's obvious that visitors to Morro Bay State Park are having a significant and positive economic impact on the City of Morro Bay. With more than one million visitors per year, including day visitors, this State Park is an economic engine for the local community.

Results showed that campers characterized themselves as 45.8% "family" and 34.6% as "family and friends," with an average size of 5.99 group members. Most of the respondents were married (84.0%) with a mean age of 49.8 years old. Nearly half (48.9%) of the respondents had earned a 4-year college degree or higher.

It would be accurate to say that Morro Bay State Park campers are mostly married, older, well educated, and affluent. These characteristics coincide with the findings of smaller surveys of campers and park visitors conducted by California State Parks.

The researchers from Cal Poly are still in the process of analyzing data and preparing more detailed findings. They have created a survey that can be applied to many communities adjacent to state parks and can help build support and understanding for the economic benefits of parks.



(Coastal Erosion, continued)

by the Chumash people, miners at the asphalt works ("tar pits"), and Civilian Conservation Corps workers developing the State Beach in the 1940s. A grant of \$26,000 will only begin to assess this unique combination of cultural resource impacts and potential hazards. The high cost to subsequently stabilize or curate the site greatly concerns the park's resource specialists, the County of Santa Barbara and the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

The Cultural Resources Division has been addressing the coastal erosion problem within State Parks, largely through the efforts of archaeologist Kathie Lindahl. Working on a 2-year deferred maintenance project, Kathie has identified the 902 recorded archaeological sites in the coastal zone that are threatened by coastal erosion. She sampled 10% of these threatened sites and carefully assessed their condition – taking photos, recording existing damage and tabulating the data to help guide management decisions. As part of the project she gathered together over 15 State Park Archaeologists and Historians from throughout the State to form the "Coastal Erosion Guild." The Guild prepared guidelines and procedures for testing the archaeological resources threatened by coastal erosion.

The Department's natural resources coastal erosion expert is Syd Brown, who was instrumental in developing State Parks' coastal erosion policy (DN 99-18) and worked on the California Resources Agency's *Draft Review of California Coastal Erosion Planning and Response*.¹ Syd has been wrestling with coastal erosion issues for the Department since 1980, and has attempted to bring a recognition of geological processes to the forefront in park management and policy implementation.

The policy notes that ocean wave erosion and seacliff retreat are ongoing natural processes actually responsible for creating invaluable scenic resources. Recorded rates of coastal erosion vary from fractions of an inch to 50-60 feet in a year. Coastal erosion tends to be episodic, site-specific, and directly related to meteorological changes and the structural and geological characteristics of the coastal landform.

The Department's policy makes four major recommendations summarized here:

- ◆ Avoid constructing new structures and facilities in areas subject to coastal erosion – unless the risk of losing the new facility is clearly offset by the investment in and the need for the facility.
- ◆ Reduce concentrated surface runoff from use areas, elevated groundwater levels from irrigation and urbanization, and surface disturbance of bluff-top soils.
- ◆ Make new structures and facilities sited in coastal hazard areas expendable or movable.
- ◆ Allow structural protection of developments only when the cost of protection is commensurate with the value (physical and intrinsic) of the development, and when the protection will not have a negative effect on the beach or near-shore environment.

The difficulty in implementing this policy comes in comparing, for example, “the risk of loss” to “the investment in and need for a facility.” This is not just a simple mathematical equation. Determining whether the cost of protection is equal to the value of the development is not an easy accounting trick, either. Planners are also challenged to predict how much erosion will take place in a given period of time. Although you can estimate costs and calculate visitor use, measuring the importance and value of a site or facility is much more difficult, especially when you’re dealing with irreplaceable archaeological sites.

Stabilizing cultural and historical resources can be very expensive, and not always effective over the long term. For archaeological resources, the question of last resort is often “how can we recover the data or a sample of the data before the whole site is lost to erosion?”

State Park planners and resource managers are doing their best to implement the coastal erosion policy – to make good judgement calls that preserve resources and facilities. A team approach makes sense against this losing battle with one of the most dynamic forces of nature. Despite knowing that the loss of land and resources is inevitable, State Park professionals are diligently preserving what they can while trying to make the best choices for the future. 

¹ http://resources.ca.gov/ocean/coastal_erosion_draft2.html
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Which Parks and Why?

How many state parks can you name?

1. This park began as a Del Mar city park in 1899 and was originally named for philanthropist Ellen Browning Scripps.
2. Originally a 1600 acre retreat purchased in 1924 by the Temple of Islam Shrine in San Francisco.
3. A structure originally built to carry sewage out to sea in 1907.
4. Where can you find the graves of Paula Fatjo’s favorite Arabian horses and dogs?
5. The first paper mill west of the Mississippi was built in 1856 and flourished until the depression of 1893 here.
6. Planet of the Apes, Swiss Family Robinson and How the West was Won were filmed here.
7. Former slave Nancy Gooch earned money doing laundry and chores here to buy her son and his family out of slavery.
8. In 1855, Andrew Smith Hallidie built a suspension bridge and aqueduct here.
9. In 1846, José Castro organized forces to expel John C. Fremont from here.
10. It is often said that more of the earth’s surface can be viewed from this peak than any other mountain in the world except Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa.

(Answers on page 6)



State Park Visitor Forecast for 2003

An estimated 32,689,968 people should be visiting California's National Parks in 2003. This figure represents a 2.7% drop from 2002 visitation figures compiled by the National Park Service's Public Use Statistics Office, which expects the downward trend to continue into 2004 before finally leveling off.

The NPS attributes this downward trend to a variety of factors: an unpredictable national economy, concerns about homeland security, shifts in visitor priorities and uncertainties about war. International visitors, who make up 20-30% of NPS visitors, have also delayed their vacation plans due to similar concerns. The number of international NPS visitors is not expected to return to pre-9/11 levels until 2004.

What does this mean for the California State Park System?

The economy in California was especially hard hit and will impact Californians' travel plans. A lack of time and money for many Californians will keep them close to home, trying to make ends meet during the tough economic times. Many domestic travelers have shifted from flying to driving, although the cost of fuel may restrict travel distances and destinations. The NPS Public Use Statistics Office has found that although domestic travelers are taking more frequent trips, they are staying closer to home (within 500 miles) and spending less time away (less than 7 days).

On a more positive note, the National Sporting Goods Association reports that outdoor recreation participation rates have grown from 2001 to 2002 for some popular activities:

water skiing	+18.4%
hiking	+17.0%
vacation/overnight camping	+13.8%
off-road mountain biking	+12.6%
canoeing	+11.5%
power boating	+11.4%

Backpacking/wilderness camping (+6.8%) and exercise walking (+5%) also showed substantial increases from 2001 to 2002.

Parents of children aged 4 to 14 ranked camping as the number one "great outdoor family experience," followed by hiking and fishing, in a 2002 nationwide Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) survey. Eighty-eight (88) percent of the parents felt that participation in outdoor activities strengthened their family relationships. REI also predicted that that families would be heading outdoors for family recreation experiences based on strong camping-gear sales.

The State Park campsite reservation company, ReserveAmerica, logged a record 10,700 calls on February 1, 2003—the first day campsite reservations were available for August. By then end of the day, most of the popular campsites were booked through Labor Day weekend. The current camping fees, although higher in 2003 than 2002, are still considered a bargain. A California State Parks marketing study found that most people didn't even realize fees were reduced in 2001, making the later 2003 increase inconsequential, particularly since the current fees are still below 2001 levels.

So, "What might this mean for the California State Park System?" The answer is an exceptionally busy summer! The California State Park System hosted a record 85 million visitors during the 2002 season, up from 64 million in 1999. Early indicators—a record number of bookings, increased outdoor recreation equipment sales, travelers staying closer to home and choosing family-oriented activities, a weakened economy, the aftermath of the Iraq war and lingering security concerns—all point to California State Parks as prime destinations for safe, economic and fun-filled family outings. 



The Search for Park Funding

When local governments have to tighten their belts, where do they look? Police and fire services usually have a higher priority than parks and recreation services. This was one of the points made by League of California Cities in a March 2003 presentation to an Assembly budget subcommittee. The League showed that typical per resident revenues from taxes and federal/state transfers declined 13% from roughly \$38 a month to \$33 in the period from the late 1970s to the late 1990s. Over the same period, comparable spending levels for police and fire services grew from a 37% share of average per resident monthly costs to a 70% share. By the year 2000, those police and fire expenditures were about four times greater than the comparable expenditures for parks. Average local spending per resident for parks and recreation had declined by 21% from 1991 to 2000 to around \$6 per month.

This message resonates with the findings of a recent report from the Public Policy Institute of California entitled *Fiscal Effects of Voter Approval Requirements on Local Governments*. The report's authors, Kim Rueben and Pedro Cerdán, looked at measures put before local voters over a 16-year period ending last year. From 1978 forward, California's voters, coupled with a string of court decisions, have put constraints on local governments' ability to collect new revenues. The report revealed that ballot measures to fund certain local services—especially schools, transportation, and fire protection—have relatively higher rates of approval compared to proposals for parks and libraries. It found approval rates could vary with geographic location, with the most likely places for passage being the Bay Area and large cities in Southern California. The report also cited different approval rates depending on type of government. According to the report, a special district tax measure has a better chance of passage (47%) than a city measure (40%) or a county measure (32%).

Past results of bond and tax elections are no guarantee of future results. For example, the Public Policy Institute's report found transportation measures generally succeeded at higher levels than

other kinds of measures during the period 1986-2000. But more recent data showed that in the November 2002 election, 4 of 5 transportation tax measures failed. Better chances for success for new measures will require careful evaluation of specific local conditions.

Park and recreation administrators are challenged, particularly when the economy is weak, to come up with the necessary funds for operations and maintenance. Their task becomes more difficult when there are big-ticket capital improvements that cannot be put off or when the customer base demands expanded services. Perhaps some of the following tools could be explored as potential new revenue sources:

MARKETING/CUSTOMER SERVICE—Are there untapped market opportunities that could yield increased program revenues?

IMPACT FEES—Are there land development projects in the works that could provide additional revenues as allowed by state law?

ASSESSMENTS—Would the community vote in support of higher taxes or fees for specific recreation improvements?

GRANTS—Are there public or private grant programs that could provide one-time revenues?

VOLUNTEERS/DONATIONS—Would people or institutions in the community offer their money or time for parks and recreation?

PARTNERSHIPS—Would another entity be interested in a collaborative effort?

Answers to these kinds of questions will, of course, depend on a complex mix of local preferences, policies and circumstances. Still, some jurisdictions have been successful. Park and recreation agencies can learn from the experiences of others and maybe even identify revenue prospects that could help deal with cyclical swings in the local economy.

The Technical Assistance Unit of the Planning Division is currently researching this subject in depth and preparing a report titled *Paying for Parks*. The report will be an overview of funding opportunities with potential to enhance revenue prospects for California's local park and recreation agencies.



On the Horizon A New Set of Classification Options For Marine Areas

Over the next few years, the Department will implement the State's new marine management areas classification system. This new system was enacted through legislation and signed into law in 2000 to help standardize and clarify the purpose and level of protection assigned to special areas in the marine environment. This includes the existing array of areas managed by the Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Parks and Recreation, as well as all new areas. The new system's six classifications are to be used for state designated marine areas:

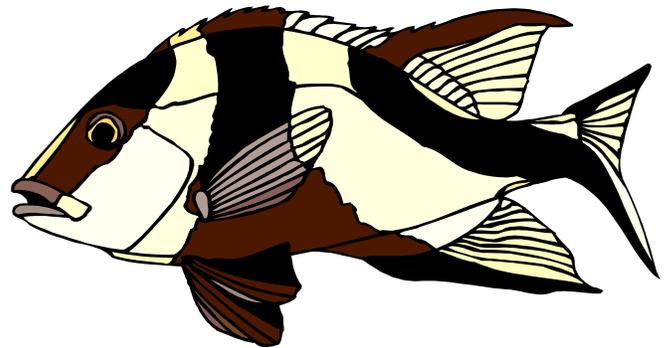
- ◆ State Marine Preserve *
- ◆ State Marine Park *
- ◆ State Marine Conservation Area *
- ◆ State Recreational Management Area
- ◆ State Marine Cultural Preservation Area
- ◆ State Water Quality Protection Area

The new law requires that all existing state marine managed areas be reclassified into one of the new classifications. For the Department, this means that marine portions of existing State Park System units will need to be separately classified into one of the new marine classifications. For example, the 1,000 acre area offshore of Salt Point State Park that is leased to the Department from the State Lands Commission will no longer be classified as a State Park. The new classification for this area has not yet been determined but will probably be either State Marine Park or State Marine Conservation Area.

Reclassifying marine portions of existing State Park System units to above classifications with asterisks (Marine Preserve, Marine Park or Marine Conservation Area) will require concurrence by both the State Park and Recreation Commission and the California Fish and Game Commission under the new law. Concurrence by the Fish and Game Commission is needed because of their jurisdiction for fishing restrictions associated with these classifications. The process and timeline for reclassifying

existing marine areas managed by the Department has not yet been established. Until the marine portions of units are formally reclassified, the area will retain its present classification and associated management objectives and restrictions under the Public Resources Code.

In the July 2003 Planning Milestones report, which documents a variety of information about the classifications of official State Park System Units, marine portions ("underwater parks") will be included in List #4. These marine portions will be noted under their associated land-based unit, usually a State Beach or State Park, until a separate marine classification is adopted by the State Park and Recreation Commission and, when required, by the Fish and Game Commission. 🐻



Answers to Which Parks and Why?

(From page 3)

1. Torrey Pines State Reserve
2. Portola Redwoods State Park
3. Malibu Pier
4. Pacheco State Park
5. Samuel P. Taylor State Park
6. Malibu Creek State Park
7. Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park
8. Auburn State Recreation Area
9. San Juan Bautista State Historic Park
10. Mount Diablo State Park

Chambers of Commerce Opinions

The Chairs of California's Chambers of Commerce were surveyed in October 2002 about their views regarding local parks and recreation facilities and programs. The survey, which considered factors of opinion, importance, satisfaction, and the perceptions of residents, was designed to be very similar to four earlier surveys of city mayors, state legislators, county supervisors, and county executives. Of the 411 Chambers surveyed, 207 responded, representing Chambers of Commerce in 44 of the 58 counties, a good representative sample of the total Chambers statewide.

When asked for their opinions, over 95% of the Chairs agreed that recreation areas and programs improve the quality of life in their community. Eighty one percent agreed that recreation areas and facilities increase nearby property values and help reduce crime and juvenile delinquency.

Not surprisingly, when asked to rate the importance of various local issues over the next five years, 99% of these business leaders assigned the highest importance to improving the local economy. Over 90% thought it was also important to provide more and better schools and to replace or upgrade existing public infrastructure.

Almost 90% of all Chambers surveyed were satisfied with the existing availability of park facilities and recreation programs but 36% cited low satisfaction with the current availability of housing and the control of growth.

This survey of business leaders produced very similar responses to the earlier surveys of government leaders. Although one might assume that business and government leaders would have different opinions and perceptions on parks and recreation, the five leaders groups essentially agreed on all issues, from the importance of a strong local economy to the value of parks and recreation programs for strengthening the community image and creating a sense of place.

The final report: Business Leaders' Opinions of Parks and Recreation: A Survey of California Chambers of Commerce will soon be available on the Planning Division's web page at: <www.parks.ca.gov> 

Plans in Print

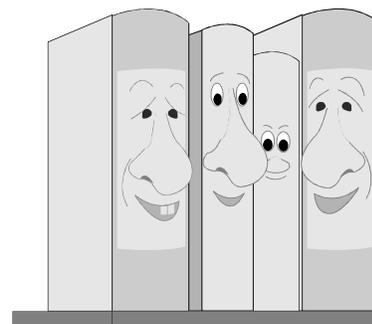
The Planning Division of California State Parks has worked diligently over the last two and a half years to produce several documents that are now in final printed form. These plans represent major efforts to provide leadership in the broad field of parks and recreation and to provide direction to the State Park System in the next decade.

The California Outdoor Recreation Plan 2002, a requirement of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program, assesses the major issues faced by California's park and recreation service providers and provides recommended actions for addressing these issues. It is a key component of the larger California Outdoor Recreation Planning Process and was last produced in 1993.

The California State Park System Plan - Part I, A System for the Future and Part II, Initiatives for Action. This internal document addresses the challenges and opportunities faced by the State Park System and provides direction for addressing current conditions and the challenges to be faced over the next ten years. The last State Park System Plan was prepared in 1982.

The California Recreational Trails Plan Phase I, identifies 12 trail-related goals and action guidelines. It is considered the first phase of a more comprehensive trails plan in progress. The last California Recreational Trails Plan was prepared in 1978.

These plans are in the process of being distributed to specific audiences. If you would like to request a copy, please contact the Planning Division at (916)653-9901, FAX (916)653-4458, or email atill@parks.ca.gov. 



Bear Facts

is published in June, October, and February of each year by the Planning Division of California State Parks

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