



Developing “broader shoulders”

“Ask not for a lighter burden,” an old proverb says, “but for broader shoulders.” Today’s “burdens” of managing parks include funding constraints, changing recreation preferences, and aging facilities. Regardless, the public expects parks to meet a multitude of needs—relieve stress, encourage exercise and health, reconnect children with nature, preserve park resources, enhance communities, attract tourists, and contribute to the quality of life.

This issue focuses on ways to develop “broader shoulders,” including: cultivating visitors who enjoy tourism along heritage corridors and other recreational travel routes; working with concessionaires, partners, associations and volunteers to serve visitors and save money; adapting to changing visitor needs; and attracting visitors to parks for affordable family outings or vacations. Work done today in these areas can continue to reap rewards for years to come.

— Planning Division staff



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Parks with cultural, historic resources can attract high-value “heritage” tourism

by Wayne Breece, wbreece@parks.ca.gov

Thanks to California’s abundance of cultural and historic resources, park agencies can promote and benefit from a popular type of pleasure travel: heritage tourism. For agencies with cultural or historic resources on site or nearby, the characteristics of heritage tourists provide good reason to court these tourists, especially during tough economic times.

Heritage tourism popular nationwide

A 2009 U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism (USCHT) Marketing Council study¹ found that 78% (about 118 million) of adult U.S. travelers participated in “cultural and heritage activities.”

The 2009 California State Parks (CSP) Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California

1. The Cultural & Heritage Traveler survey. Press release: <http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/documents/CHTStudyOct2009.pdf>

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Concessions offer park agencies “win-win” in tough times

by Sara Baldwin, sbaldwin@parks.ca.gov, and Eileen Hook, ehook@parks.ca.gov

Visitors touring Angel Island State Park by Segway® Personal Transporter or dining at the conference center at Asilomar State Beach may not realize it, but California State Parks’ Concessions Program makes these experiences possible. Offering services typically not provided by park employees, concessions can also provide cost savings. Concessionaires are especially attractive partners in tough times.

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What is heritage tourism?

Heritage tourism is one of many terms, including geotourism, historic tourism, and cultural heritage tourism, that describe tourism focusing on legacy or tradition.

Cultural heritage tourism is defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic and natural resources.” <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/heritage-tourism/>

This article uses the term *heritage tourism* for brevity and clarity. It is worth noting that respondents to an informal NTHP survey associated the word *cultural* with a more upscale, urban experience, and the word *heritage* with history and “more of a grassroots experience.”

(SPOA) shows that most respondents (about 55%) visited historic or cultural sites during the past 12 months. Complete survey findings are at: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=23880

CSP's 2007-2009 State Park Visitors Survey shows that for about 87% of these state park visitors, the preservation of natural and historic resources is a “very important” recreation aspect of the park they were visiting. (Findings will be published in 2010.)

Spending more, staying longer

In her 2010 presentation, “The Cultural Traveler,” to the California Travel and Tourism Commission, USCHT Marketing Council Executive Director Sheila Armstrong reported that compared to other tourists, cultural and heritage travelers spend more, travel

more frequently, seek out educational cultural and heritage experiences, and are willing to pay more for lodging that reflects the authentic experience. Well educated and affluent, they spend an average of \$994 per trip, and contribute more than \$192 billion annually to the U.S. economy. They have high expectations for authenticity, uniqueness, experience, and value. <http://tourism.visitcalifornia.com/Industry/TravelIndustry/Presentations/>

Developing successful heritage tourism

The National Trust for Historic Preservation identifies these five principles for successful, sustainable cultural heritage tourism:

- 1. Collaborate.** For example, bring together partners who may not have worked together before.
- 2. Find the fit.** For example, match programs to regional culture.
- 3. Make sites and programs come alive.** Involve all five senses.
- 4. Focus on quality and authenticity.**
- 5. Preserve and protect.**

The NTHP site also has links to resources, including, workshops, documents, and consulting services for state and local organizations. <http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/index.html>

CSP is committed to heritage tourism

The CSP system includes many historic and natural treasures.



Visitors at Railtown 1897 State Historic Park in Jamestown enjoy historic railroad cars and steam-powered excursions.

CSP efforts related to heritage tourism include:

- The *California History Plan: Telling the Stories of the Californians* describes what is missing from the state's preserved cultural heritage and how to fill the gaps. Like the NTHP, the plan views collaboration as essential to ensuring preservation. Local agencies and other organizations

can find ideas in this plan. http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22491

- The *California Recreational Trails Plan* includes historic routes such as the Juan Bautista de Anza and Pony Express national historic trails. Agencies near these routes can incorporate these trails and heritage corridors, such as the Farms and Forests route, into their heritage tourism offerings.

See the sidebar below for one CSP proposal. http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=23443

Investing for tomorrow

Even during tough times, the affluent and educated heritage tourist is likely to have the means to travel. Today's efforts to draw this type of tourism will help encourage these tourists to keep exploring California's historic, natural, and cultural treasures for years to come. ●

Heritage corridors could help spark heritage tourism in Central Valley



A distinctive Kern County restaurant in the area of the proposed Black Gold Heritage Corridor.



Waterways, such as the Tuolumne River, above, and their riparian habitats are featured in Central Valley heritage corridors.

Drawing on the authority of the California Recreational Trails Act,* the Planning Division's *Central Valley Vision* implementation planning evaluated five heritage corridor routes to connect state parks and local points of interest in the Central Valley:

- **The California Delta Heritage Corridor** connects historic Delta communities with natural, historic and recreational sites such as Brannan Island State Recreation Area and agricultural sites.
- **The Cross-California Ecological Corridor**, also called the Farms and Forests route, crosses the valley's riparian and wildlife-friendly farm sites along Highway 20 from the coast to Clear Lake, past Sutter Buttes, up to the Yuba River and into the Sierra.
- **The Black Gold Heritage Corridor** links oil industry sites in Kern and Kings counties, including Elk Hills and Bakersfield refineries.
- **The Central Valley Farm Trails Heritage Corridor** connects Highway 99 and Interstate 5 to agriculture sites in the Central Valley. It includes stops at farm communities and destinations such as Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park and local farm museums.
- **Echoes of Our Ancestors Heritage Corridor** explores the diverse cultural history of the Central Valley, including that of California Indians and Chinese communities.

*This act charges California State Parks with identifying and promoting heritage corridors and trails throughout the state. Under this act, a heritage corridor is a "regional, state, or nationwide alignment of historical, natural, or conservation education significance, with roads, state and other parks, greenways, or parallel recreational trails, intended to have guidebooks, signs, and other features to enable self-guiding tourism, and environmental conservation education along most of its length..." (For complete text of the Act, see Public Resources Code Section 5070-5077.8, available at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov>.)

Concessions, from page 1.

Concessions serve parks, visitors

Concessions offer many benefits to both visitors and parks—perhaps the most obvious is that concessions bring additional resources into parks. When dollars are tight, concessions offer a way to implement park plans. In the program's 2008-2009 annual report, CSP Director Ruth Coleman wrote that with the assistance of more than 160 concessions, "public access to California State Parks' natural, cultural and historic resources continues with today's economic challenges."

Concessions also can increase revenue at parks. In fiscal year 2008-2009, concessions retail sales at state parks totaled nearly \$88 million and resulted in nearly \$12 million in revenue. Concession categories providing the most revenue to the State in 2008-2009 were:

1. Restaurants and catering services (\$4 million)



Segway tours of Angel Island State Park are offered by a concession. (Photo courtesy of California Parks Company.)

Concessions' 50-year history at state parks

A 1960 California law allows concessions at state parks (Public Resource Code 5019.10, et. seq.) "for the safety and convenience of the general public in the use and enjoyment of, and the enhancement of recreational and educational experiences."

2. Facility improvements (\$2 million)

3. Retail sales and gifts (\$2 million).

(All figures are rounded.)

In addition, concessionaires can often make decisions quickly, offering much-needed flexibility to government agencies.

Finally, concessions may attract visitors who might not otherwise visit parks. For example, concessionaires for some local and regional park districts (such as the East Bay Regional Parks District) and some state parks promote the locations for weddings.

Periodic survey keeps tabs on public preferences

CSP's periodic Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California (SPOA) shows that Californians' approval for private involvement in public park and recreation areas increased in all categories surveyed between 2002 and

2008. In 2002, about 68% thought it appropriate that private firms provide rental of recreational equipment such as boats and camping equipment; in 2008 about 75% did. In 2002, about 44% thought it appropriate that private firms provide general maintenance of facilities and grounds; in 2008, about 58% did.

Most 2008 respondents, however, did not favor privatization of law enforcement (about 43% thought it appropriate) or total operation and management of parks or recreation areas (about 28% thought it appropriate).

Summary

Concessions can be a key element in providing visitors with memorable experiences. For a closer look at one state park concessionaire, see the interview on the next page.

Where to find more

See these California State Parks resources:

- Concessions Program, California State Parks. http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22374
- 2009 Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes report (complete findings). http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/2009%20spoa%20complete%20findings%209_28_09.pdf ●

Interview with an outdoor recreation concessionaire California Parks Company (CPC) provides outdoor enthusiasts with services—and memories

by Eileen Hook, ehook@parks.ca.gov

As parks nationwide deal with cutbacks and belt-tightening, animated discussions are taking place considering complex questions such as: What is the appropriate role of private industry in parks? Do we need to re-examine our current model? We waded into the discussion by interviewing a successful concessionaire.

The California Parks Company (CPC, <http://www.calparksco.com>) has been providing recreation opportunities in California since 1975. CPC operates a wide variety of concessions for the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, California State Parks, county and regional park agencies, and water districts. John Koeberer, CEO of CPC, answered our questions about being a concessionaire on public lands.

What kinds of recreation opportunities does CPC provide? Boat rentals and moorage, food services, gift and camp stores, lodging, fee collection, and Segway rentals, to name a few. CPC's newest offering is quagga mussel inspection services. No other private company that I know of provides quagga inspection services.

How would you describe the role of concessionaires in the future of outdoor recreation in California? Concessionaires such as CPC would like to provide maintenance and fee collection. This frees up agency funds for other purposes like resource protection, overall park general management and interpretation.



A CPC employee inspects a boat for the invasive quagga mussel. (Photo courtesy of CPC.)

Are there some concessions that are 'easy' to implement with today's limited staff and that don't conflict with regulations? Replace current campsites in a low-usage campground with tent cabins or similar alternative camping. There's a high demand for up-scale camping. CPC operates parking lots for some agencies with a coin-operated automatic gate system. People appreciate park staff for the interpretive programs, but not so much for collecting the entry fees.

What are the benefits of being a park concessionaire? CPC employees enjoy some of the same benefits as recreation agency employees. We operate in beautiful locations, and we like seeing people enjoying the parks.

California State Parks publications available online New audiences provide opportunities, challenges

by Scott Humphrey, shump@parks.ca.gov

Two recent Planning Division publications help park agencies respond to the challenges provided by two major U.S. trends. *Here Come the Millennials* offers tips on how to attract the younger generation. *Group Areas for Camping and Picnicking* provides expert advice on facilities to meet the needs of larger groups. Both publications are available on the Planning Division website.

Here Come the Millennials: What you need to know to connect to this new generation

How can park staff engage the interest and support of young people so that they value the park experience? According to Kathy Dolinar, State Park Superintendent, Ocotillo Wells District, "...[W]e have to change and plan for change ...to be able



An interpretive light show at Los Angeles State Historic Park had an electronic component, which appeals to today's younger Americans.

to reach [people] and remain relevant for years to come."

Often known as Millennials, the generation of Americans that is now about 10 to 28 years old is accustomed to fast-paced, technologically driven interaction with tools such as cell phones, computer games and Facebook.

Parks must explore attracting Millennials using the tools that they enjoy, as well as providing them with a stimulating experience once they are at the park, possibly using the same tools.

Embracing the use of electronic technology may be one of the best ways that park staff can ensure that parks remain relevant to Millennials.

To learn more, see *Here Come the Millennials*, a Planning Division publication, at http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/millennials%20final_03_08_10.pdf



Parks across the U.S. are expanding the size of facilities as families visit parks in larger groups. Larger BBQs and group areas are in demand. (Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Park district, Minnesota.)

Group Areas for Camping and Picnicking

At parks across the U.S., staff are adapting existing camping and picnic sites for group use or adding new group areas. Many of these sites were constructed for nuclear families of 4-6 people. Today's and tomorrow's park visitors, who are increasingly Hispanic and Asian, are more likely to want larger tables and bigger BBQ areas for socializing and cooking meals with their extended families.

To learn more, see *Group Areas for Picnicking and Camping*, a Planning Division publication, at <http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/final%20group%20areas.pdf> ●

State parks attendance figures due soon; national parks stats show long-term trends

by Barry Trute, btrute@parks.ca.gov, and Philomene Smith, psmith@parks.ca.gov

On the surface, the tough economy would seem to bode well for park attendance. One study¹ suggests that people will spend more on “local out-of-home entertainment options.” As for actual visitation, a quick look at summary figures from a soon-to-be-released CSP report and a review of national park attendance trends yield a mixed picture. With the wide diversity of park types and variable attendance reporting, matching economic trends to attendance trends is difficult.

Attendance at state parks

CSP’s annual *State Park System Statistical Report* for fiscal year (FY)

2008-09 (July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009), scheduled for release soon, reports on visits to state parks.

Day-use visits at all state parks totaled about 65.4 million for FY2008-09, about a 5% decrease from FY2007-08. This includes an adjustment of 3.2 million in day-use visitation to correct errors in the FY2007-08 report. Over the last eight years, day use at state parks is down about 17 percent. Fee increases during this period may have something to do with this.

About 7.2 million visitors stayed overnight at state parks in FY2008-09, about a 4% decrease from FY2007-08. Districts in popular vacation destinations such as the Sierra Nevada mountains, the Mendocino coast, the San Luis Obispo area, and the North Coast, saw overnight visits either increase

or remain basically unchanged from the previous year.

Attendance at national parks in California

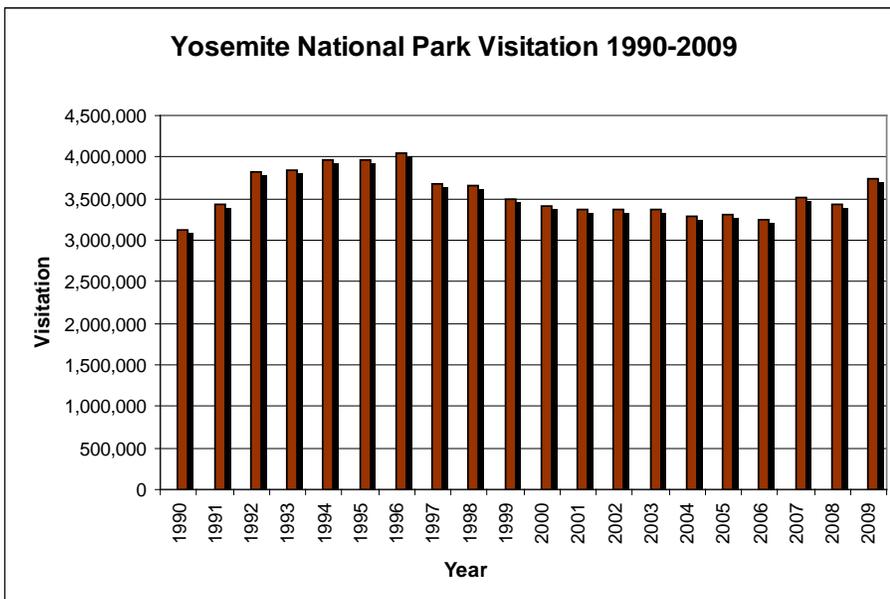
Statistics for national parks in California show that attendance trends vary by park. For Yosemite, attendance peaked at about 4 million visitors per year in the mid-1990s; figures for recent years show some movement upward. (See graph.) For most other California national parks with more than 1 million visits a year, attendance figures show that:

- Attendance has risen consistently for decades at Joshua Tree National Monument.
- Attendance has been flat since 1993 at Point Reyes National Seashore.
- At Kings Canyon, Death Valley, and Cabrillo National Monument attendance has been declining since the 1970s, the 1980s and the late 1990s, respectively.

CSP’s 2009 *Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California* (SPOA)² report shows that almost 74% of residents visited an outdoor recreation area in the month prior to the survey. But only about 41% of respondents spent between 1-5 days in a *developed, nature-oriented* park and recreation area (such as a state park) in the last year. Agencies need to somehow entice more of the other 59% to developed, nature-oriented recreation areas such as California’s state parks. Perhaps the six-part series, “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea,” televised last fall on PBS, will attract them. Meanwhile, stay tuned for 2010 attendance data. ●

1. Study by White Hutchinson Leisure & Learning Group. See http://www.whitehutchinson.com/news/lenews/2009_september/article105.shtml

2. Complete findings: http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/2009%20spoa%20complete%20findings%209_28_09.pdf



Yosemite National Park visitation peaked in the mid-1990s but has increased in recent years.

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Published twice a year, *The California Park Planner* provides employees of California State Parks and park agencies with information on trends and developments affecting park planning.

Partnerships, associations, and volunteers bridge funding gaps

By Sara Baldwin, sbaldwin@parks.ca.gov

California State Parks depends on its corporate partners, non-profit associations and volunteers. Those who head up these CSP programs offer tips for agencies.

Corporate Partnerships and Financial Support Programs. One example of a program is the corporate solicitation of sponsorships for surfing events at state beaches. Brent Reed, Deputy Director of Partnerships and Consumer Strategies, advises these steps: 1) Identify companies with a history of supporting causes that match the objectives of your event or program. 2) Find the right contact (often the manager of the public affairs or marketing department). 3) Keep your request simple and be realistic about the amount. 4) Always acknowledge your donors: in-park recognition is great; external recognition, such as press releases, is even better.

Program website: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24417

Cooperating Associations Program. Over 80 non-profit charitable organizations assist CSP with facilities, programs, and publications, and contribute over \$10 million annually to CSP. John Mott, Program Manager, offers these tips for agencies seeking non-profit partners: 1) Ensure that the partnership has support from the top down and that time and other resources are available to maintain the relationship. 2) A shared vision, focusing on an important need, keeps people focused on the goal and helps provide motivation during any “rough spots.” 3) Don’t “reinvent the wheel”; organizations such as the Nonprofit Resource Center (<http://www.nprcenter.org/>) can sometimes match agencies with non-profit organizations willing to help. **Program website:** <http://www.parks.ca.gov/associations>

Volunteers in Parks Program (VIP). CSP volunteers donated over a million hours (worth over \$21 million) in 2008, one of the largest figures on record. Program coordinator Margo Cowan states that several elements account for today’s surge in volunteering, including the availability of “volunteer” websites for both volunteers and those seeking volunteers (one example: <http://www.serve.gov>). Her tips for agencies looking for volunteers: 1) Contact your local volunteer organizations (for example, find a local United Way organization at <http://www.liveunited.org>). 2) Look for volunteers among current visitors, such as high-energy mountain bikers who may want to “take it to the next level” by volunteering to maintain trails. Also see the CSP publication, *The Gift of Time*, which has resources for parks and recreation providers, <http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/the%20gift%20of%20time.pdf>

Program website: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=886 ●



In 2008, volunteers—such as this musician in period garb at Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park—donated time worth over \$21 million to California State Parks.