

California's Recreation Policy

Recreational opportunities provide Californians the freedom to develop their innate capabilities, intelligently use their energies, and enrich their health and well-being. Research consistently points toward recreation as essential to the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of individuals, communities and society as a whole. It is therefore important that all Californians be provided with adequate opportunities by which they can pursue their recreational interests. In recognition of this, the State Legislature delegated the responsibility for preparing a Recreation Policy for the State of California to the State Park and Recreation Commission. Public Resources Code (Section 540) directs that:

The Commission shall formulate, in cooperation with other state agencies, interested organizations and citizens, and shall recommend to the Director (of the Department of Parks and Recreation) for adoption by him, a comprehensive recreational policy for the State of California.

This California Recreation Policy is intended to be broad in scope and to consider the full range of recreation activities - active, passive, indoors and out-of-doors. The policy considers the means by which recreational opportunities are provided – the lands, facilities, programs, and support functions. The policy recognizes the many important dimensions of recreation. It recognizes the personal and broad social benefits gained through participation in healthful recreation activities. It takes into consideration the way in which recreation contributes to the protection of valuable natural, historic and cultural resources that are important ingredients of the recreation experience. Finally, this policy acknowledges the economic aspects of recreation as a generator of income and employment, and as one of the major attractions on which tourism is based.

The California Recreation Policy is directed at recreation providers at all levels: federal, state, and local agencies and special districts; private suppliers; and quasi-public or nonprofit organizations. It is intended that all suppliers of park facilities and recreation opportunities will be guided by California's Recreation Policy as they work to provide the high quality recreational opportunities that Californians have come to expect and which they deserve.

The State's Recreation Policy addresses:

- The need for an adequate supply of park and recreation lands, facilities and programs;
- The vital role of parks and recreation in the health and wellness of Californians;
- The need for responsible stewardship of natural, cultural, and historic resources;
- The need for leadership to be demonstrated at all levels of government to ensure quality experiences and delivery of services;
- The right of Californians to have full and fair access to recreation resources.

I. Sufficient Park and Recreation Lands, Facilities and Programs Are Available To Meet Californian's Needs

The supply of parklands, recreation areas and trail corridors must be adequate to meet current and future demands, particularly in the State's most populated areas.

It is State Policy That:

- An adequate supply of park and recreation lands, facilities and programs exist throughout California so that all people can engage in near-home activities and recreation pursuits, as well as opportunities to visit more distant locations for extended leisure time or vacation activities.
- Special attention is given to providing parkland and developed recreation areas in and near urban areas where most Californians live. In heavily populated urban areas, special attention will be given to the protection of natural resource lands and open space.
- Government entities closest to the recreation resources and particularly to the sources of recreation demand shall have the primary responsibility for providing needed recreation opportunities. In urban and suburban areas, such responsibility shall generally fall to local government – to agencies of the cities, counties and special districts. The state, by means of grants and technical assistance, shall aid local government in the provision of these services. It shall be the responsibilities of the state to take the lead where resources or recreation demand are of greater than regional significance.
- In areas experiencing social and economic problems, particularly affecting California's youth, park and recreation offerings are coordinated with other social service programs in such fields as education, health care, housing, juvenile justice and social welfare.

II. Provide for the Health and Wellness of Californians through Recreation

Recreation activities, facilities and programs are vital to improving the health and wellness of Californians

It is State Policy that:

- Park and Recreation lands, facilities and programs be recognized as a positive force for individuals, communities and society with the potential to foster community pride, to reduce crime and to encourage healthy lifestyles.

- Recreation programs are provided for the children and youth of California that encourage constructive play and which ensure lifelong physical and emotional health benefits. Park and recreation professionals shall articulate the unified message that abundant parks, sports fields and recreation areas provide youth the opportunity to be involved in positive, supervised activities, and that recreation services play an important role in reducing juvenile delinquency, gang involvement, teen pregnancy, and truancy.
- Programs be flexible, active, engaging and readily available for working adults and seniors.
- Federal, state and local decision-makers and program administrators weigh the important quality of life benefits associated with adequate park and recreation services in equal measure with other vital community services when considering the allocation of funding and staffing resources. Recreation decision-makers should seek opportunities to collaborate with health and human service agencies.

III. California's Outstanding Bounty of Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources Must be Protected.

Educating Californians about their state's invaluable resources is a critical part of ensuring their availability for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

It is State Policy That:

- Californians be made aware of the unique and important environmental, ecological, scenic, and historical resources contained within parklands and recreation areas.
- Consideration is given to the conservation of special status species, wildlife habitat, and the restoration of important natural areas such as biological linkages and wetlands. The preservation of cultural and historic resources such as historic trails or notable buildings will be similarly considered.
- Consideration is given to protecting working landscapes involving important habitat, natural and historic resources through voluntary land protection agreements such that these important resources will be available for all Californians for all time.

- An environmental ethic is fostered among Californians, particularly its youth that will encourage people to carefully and wisely use the state's finite natural and historic resources that are the real wealth of California.
- Educational materials are made available that have consistent core messages designed to protect resource values and raise individual awareness to potential concerns.
- Parklands are planned and managed to provide optimal recreation opportunities without unduly damaging valuable natural or cultural resources. Management actions will strive to correct problems that have the potential to damage sensitive areas and degrade resources.
- Parklands are promoted for the strong economic benefits they provide, whether through jobs, serving as a tourist destination, supporting gateway communities, providing private concession operations or through increased property values.

IV. Build and Support Strong Leadership in Recreation Management

Leadership, cooperation and partnership must be demonstrated at all levels to ensure quality recreation resources, opportunities, programs and services are provided.

It is State Policy That:

- Elected officials, business leaders and local decision-makers understand their role in creating a vision for the provision of park and recreation services to the people of California. This vision should ensure a full range of stimulating, enjoyable and safe recreation experiences are available to all Californians, regardless of their skills or abilities. Tolerance and respect for different recreation interests and pursuits should be part of this vision. It is the responsibility of the State of California to provide the leadership needed to bring this vision together.
- The State of California, through its Department of Parks and Recreation, shall encourage and stimulate active and coordinated participation of federal, state, and local agencies, as well as the private and non-profit sectors, in providing park and recreation lands, facilities and programs.
- Providers in the private sector are encouraged to develop and operate a wide range of recreation resources, and to provide a wide range of recreation opportunities on both private lands and appropriate public lands.
- Park and recreation providers, as part of the deliberative process of budget formulation, shall identify methods for generating revenue for parkland

acquisition, facility development, interpretation, recreation programs and maintenance.

- The people of California have the opportunity to, and are encourage to, participate as volunteers in the operation of recreation facilities and the operation of recreation programs.
- California's public and private schools, colleges and universities continue and expand their programs and curricula with regard to a wide range of leisure interests and skills and the development of professional leadership.

V. Park and Recreation Lands, Facilities, Programs and Services are Accessible to all Californians.

All Californians have the right to enjoy the State's park and recreation legacy.

It is State Policy That:

- Physical barriers and administrative obstacles are overcome so that California's public parks and recreation land, facilities and programs are accessible.
- The needs and sensitivities of park and recreation users, non-users, and the special needs of underserved communities are considered.
- Through careful planning and parkland acquisition, children in California's urban areas will have safe access to a park within walking distance of where they live.
- Low income communities and communities of color will have the same access to healthful outdoor settings, well-maintained facilities, and professionally competent programs as are enjoyed by all Californians.