

# **Annual Report to the Governor on the State Park System 2004 - 2005**

**by the  
California State Park  
and Recreation Commission**

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## **Public Resources Code Section 535, *Annual Report to the Governor***

“The commission shall report annually to the Governor, through the director, on existing and operating recreational facilities, programs and activities of the state park system, and on the needs of the state and local subdivisions thereof for recreational facilities, programs, and activities, and shall make recommendations for programs and activities to meet future needs of the state for parks and recreation.”

### **California State Parks**

- There are 278 park units in the California State Park System in 23 districts, including seven State Vehicular Recreation Areas.
- California State Parks owns 1.5 million acres of land - nearly 1.5% of the total area of California.
- State Park lands include over 6.5 million feet of waterfront. This includes 3.4 million feet of lake shoreline, 1.6 million feet (295 miles) of ocean shoreline, and 1.7 million feet of river frontage.
- State Parks has 15,000 individual and group camp sites, 590 non-camping overnight accommodations, nearly 8,000 picnic sites and 3,760 miles of non-motorized trails.
- Over 81 million people visited California State Parks in the 2003/04 fiscal year. At 1 oz. per person, that equals more than 600,000 gallons of sunscreen!
- California State Parks can employ about 2,400 permanent staff and about 2,700 seasonal staff to administer, protect, operate and maintain the State Park System.
- In 2004, State Park Rangers and Lifeguards:
  - found over 1,200 lost persons and rescued more than 11,000 individuals
  - provided medical aid to over 7,600 injured persons
  - issued over 18,000 citations and made 1,600 arrests
- Nearly 12,000 volunteers contributed almost 900,000 hours to the Department in 2004. Volunteers staff visitor centers, maintain trails, serve as camp hosts, provide educational programs and special events and do much more.
- In 2003/04, 2 million visitors enjoyed guided hikes, tours, talks and demonstrations.
- Each year approximately 550,000 school children attend formal interpretive programs in state parks.



# CALIFORNIA'S PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS A REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

## The State of the State Park System

### Introduction

Our State Park system is the premiere recreation destination for millions of Californians each year. The Department is also poised to make a meaningful impact on childhood obesity, offer accessible recreation to the growing numbers of Baby Boomers and better serve our increasingly ethnically and economically diverse population.

The obstacles we face in achieving these goals include dramatic increases in our State's population, even greater increases in the numbers of park visitors, Department funding levels that have not kept pace, a seriously crumbling infrastructure and degradation of our State's most valued natural and cultural resources.

The following pages detail the challenges facing California State Parks, describe the Department's current goals and recent achievements and provide a brief overview of the Department's financial conditions.

### Current Challenges

#### Population Changes

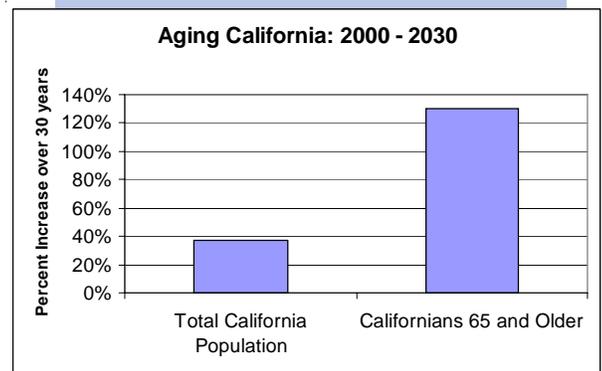
- Our state is growing older, more diverse and overweight. The percent of citizens 65 or older is increasing more than three times faster than the overall population.
- Our ethnic mix is shifting, with substantial growth in Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander populations.
- Our residents have gained an average of almost 11 pounds each in the past ten years alone.
- More than one third of California's children aged 9 to 11 are either overweight or at risk of being overweight.



- The population increase (currently 1.5% annually) is occurring in California's urban centers, with the greatest growth occurring in major metropolitan areas - Los Angeles, San Diego, and the San Francisco Bay Area. California is one of the most urbanized states in the nation. These people need parks.



Ruth Coleman, Director



Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park

- Rapid growth in visitation to California's park and recreation areas is already enormous and continues to grow (a 9% increase since 1999/2000). Since September 11, 2001, Californians are vacationing closer to home, traveling more by car, and visiting more in-state destinations.
- More than 82 million people visited State Parks in fiscal year 2003/04; seven million camped overnight.



Los Angeles State Historic Park



### Off-Highway Vehicle Demand

- We also have the largest number of off-highway vehicle enthusiasts in the nation. Between 1994 and 2004, the California State Parks reported attendance at State Vehicular Recreation Areas increased by 156%, from 1.5 million to 3.8 million annually.
- Combined with a 383% increase in off-road vehicles in the last 25 years this has created an



Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area

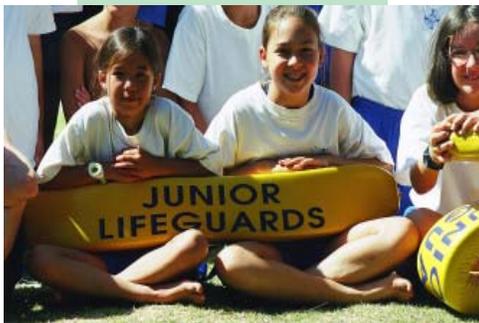
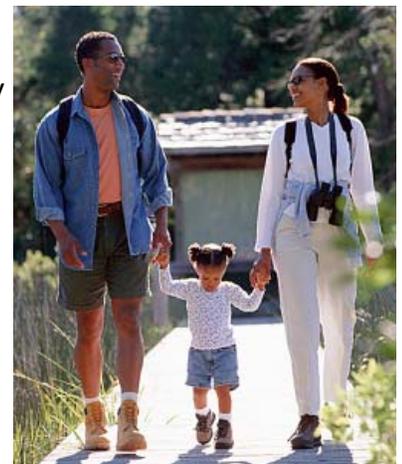
unprecedented demand for local off-highway vehicle recreation opportunities. Where are these Californians going to go?

### Inadequate Funding

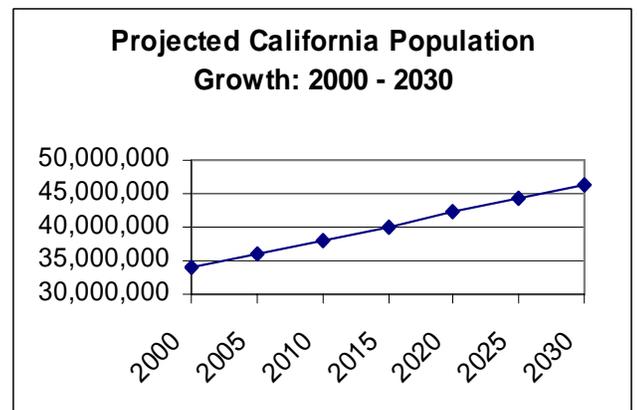
- Despite significant increases in the California population and Parks visitation, the Department's funding levels have not kept pace.
- From fiscal year 1987/88 to 2003/04:

- Our State's population increased 31%
- Park visitors increased by about 50%
- State Park System acreage increased 15%

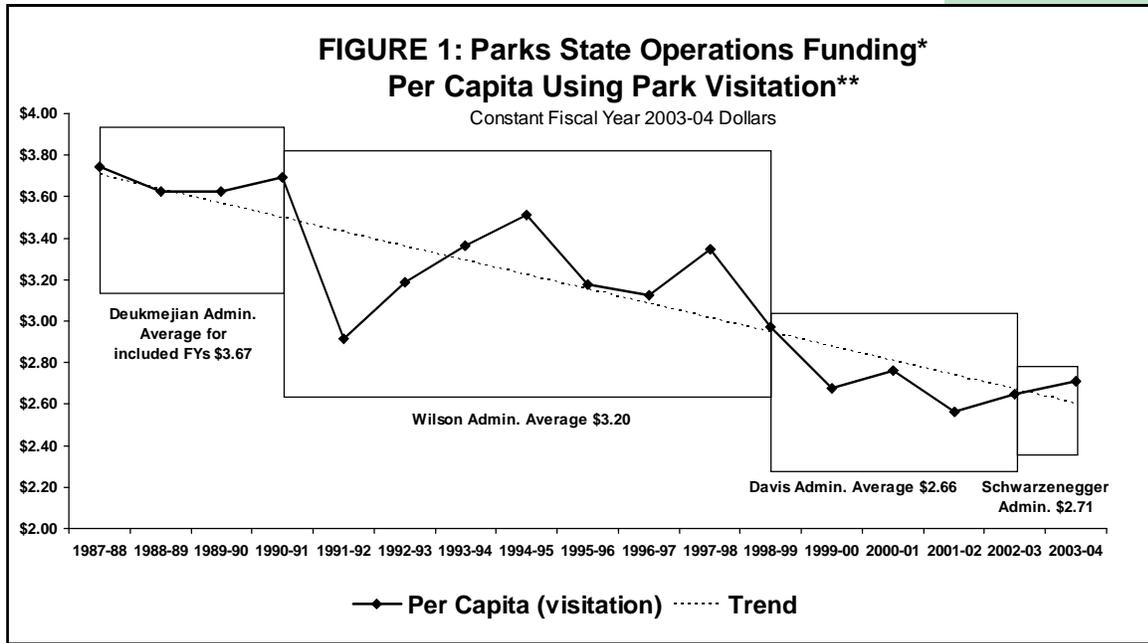
- At the same time, growth in the Department's budget and staffing has been insufficient, preventing Parks from keeping up with the pressures of increased visitation.



Candlestick Point State Recreation Area



- The chart below shows this disparity by tracking the amount of funding the Department receives per capita by Park attendance.



\*Current Year Support Budget excluding carryover authority, one-time funds, OHMVR, bonds & reimbursements adjusted to 2003-2004 California CPI  
\*\*Excludes OHV park visitation

This situation is not sustainable over the long-term and could reduce public access to State Parks through park closures and resource degradation. Inadequate funding reduces our ability to control invasive plant and animal species and maintain our historic structures.

- Reduced access to or closure of Parks' facilities could also negatively impact the State's economy. Several studies support our estimate in 2000 that California State Parks delivers \$2.34 in General Fund tax revenue for every state dollar invested in the System.
- One of the most obvious signs of this funding strain is the Department's growing maintenance backlog. The current deferred maintenance figure is \$906 million - which continues to increase every year. Lack of funding for ongoing maintenance only aggravates the problem.



Point Lobos State Reserve

## Current Goals

### Urban Parks

- The State Park System must respond to changing demographics to meet California's needs, especially in urban areas.

### New Recreation Opportunities

- Families and seniors need more group/large-family camping and alternative camping facilities.
- State Parks should continue promoting healthier physical and mental lifestyles through using State Park trails, programs and outdoor facilities and by educating the public on the available opportunities.
- Recreation and related interpretation and education programs can educate visitors about leading healthy lifestyles, protect the natural and cultural heritage of California State Parks, and make kids healthier.



Pío Pico State Historic Park



Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park

### Deferred Maintenance

- Aging facilities need to be updated; deferred maintenance projects funded and completed.
- Deferred maintenance increases liability, health and safety risks, and increases construction costs.
- Responding to deferred maintenance is a top priority for California State Parks.

### Central Valley Vision

- The Department's new Central Valley Vision is engaging local communities, increasing State Parks' visibility and service to Valley residents and visitors, and developing a roadmap for State Parks' future role in the area. The Central Valley Vision process identified 22 significant areas in the Valley for potential acquisition, development and/or preservation. Implementing the Central Valley Vision Report will help State Parks keep pace with the unprecedented growth in California's "heartland."

## Recent Achievements

### Serving all Californians

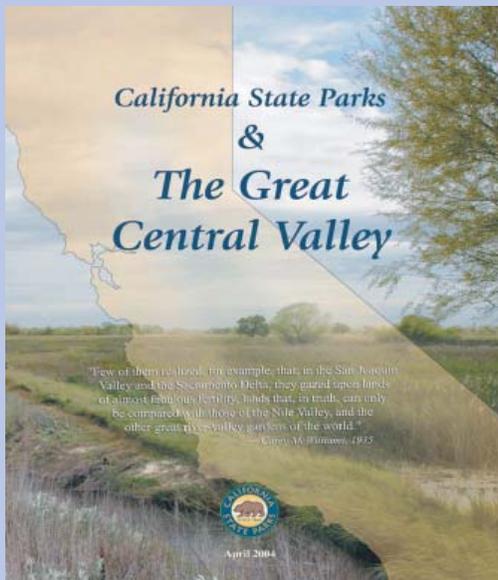
- California State Parks is reaching out to the State's aging population through alternative camping opportunities, such as tent cabins and yurts, and other facilities more convenient for older visitors. State Parks also has an aggressive program for providing accessible camping and other forms of recreation.

### Combating the Obesity Epidemic

- To help combat the obesity epidemic, State Park visitors will soon be treated to healthier food choices and learn about California-grown produce as part of an innovative program to modify concession agreements. The Department also encourages walking and other exercise through its extensive 3,760-mile trail system, much also open to cyclists and/or equestrians.

### Serving Urban Youth

- State Parks recognizes that many young people, especially those in urban settings, do not have the opportunity to enjoy State Parks.
  - Organized activities and events such as Beach Play Day, Youth Leadership Institute, and Aquatic Camp, introduce them to State Parks and beaches, many for the first time, and promote positive leadership qualities. FamCamp strengthens family ties in a supportive first-time camping experience.



## Beach Play Day



- Urban youth with good grades have the thrill of riding an off-highway vehicle through a new Police Activities League partnership.

- The interactive Parks Online Resources for Teachers & Students (PORTS) video program helps school children in Los Angeles experience the wonders of an underwater world as they speak to a ranger diving off Crystal Cove State Park or help pan for gold with a ranger in Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park.

### Acquisition and Development

California State Parks' recent acquisition and development accomplishments span the length and breadth of the State:



- The recently restored **Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park**, was home to California's eighth governor and is the oldest historic home open to the public in Sacramento. Bringing the Stanford Mansion back to life cost approximately \$20

million. These funds were raised by State Parks (60%), the Leland Stanford Mansion Foundation and the Stanford Mansion Campaign (40%) — one of the most visible and successful examples of a public/private partnership in the capital.

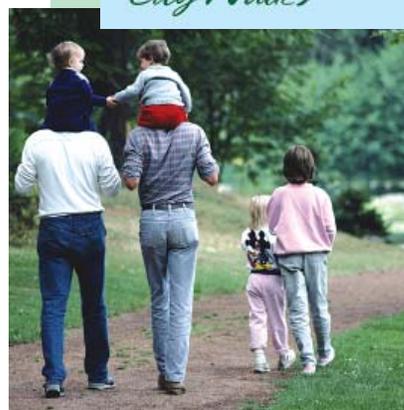
- Acquiring the **1,800-acre Peace Valley in the Sutter Buttes mountain range**, which cost \$3.3 million with almost \$400,000 coming as a gift from the grantor, fulfilled a State Parks plan from the 1920s.
- A gift of **1,500 Hearst Ranch acres and 18 miles of shoreline** was acquired around Hearst Castle.
- Acquiring the **4,000-acre Vallecitos Ranch addition to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park** cost \$4 million. The funds came from private donor and non-profit agency gifts and grants of \$2.2 million.
- The **groundbreaking at Rio de Los Angeles State Park, State Recreation Area**, provides critical open space to urban residents in the state's largest city.
- Opening of the State Parks **California's Remarkable Women** exhibit in the California Museum for History, Women and the Arts honors the legacy and celebrates the accomplishments of California's inspiring women. We completed this 3,000 square-foot exhibit in less than five months.

### Recreation Training and Technical Assistance

- State Parks also understands that federal,



Mount Tamalpais State Park

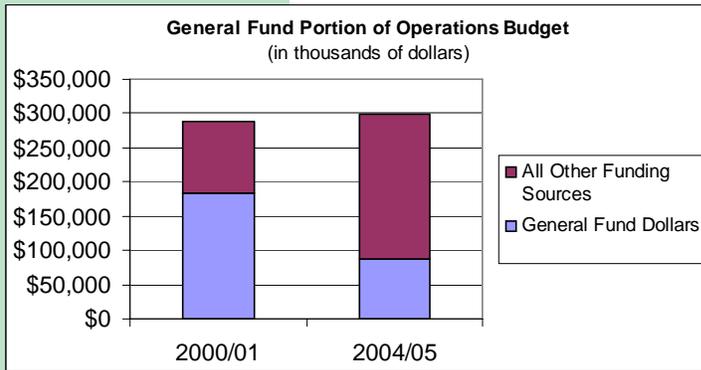




state, city, county and private recreation providers must partner together to meet the varied recreation needs of California's population. The Department continues to help a wide range of park and recreation service providers with training and technical assistance.

### General Plans Completed

- The State Park and Recreation Commission also approved eight State Park general plans in 2004, helping State Parks further promote camping, boating, swimming and newer forms of recreation while continuing to protect critical environmental resources:
  - Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds
  - Dockweiler State Beach
  - Doheny State Beach
  - Fort Ord Dunes State Park
  - Malibu Creek State Park
  - Point Sur State Historic Park
  - Sugarloaf Ridge State Park
  - Tomales Bay State Park



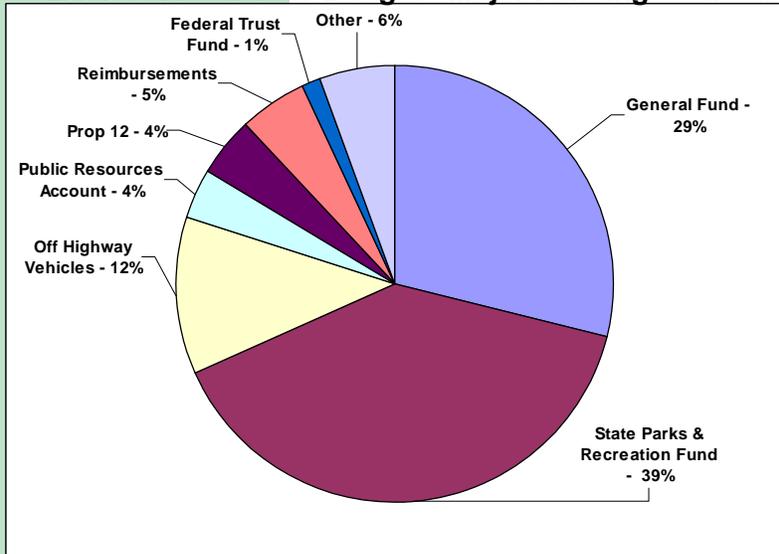
### Financial Conditions

- In the last four years State Parks has reduced its reliance on General Fund dollars by more than 30%.



- In response to the budget crisis, State Parks raised day-use and camping fees July 1, 2003 to help compensate for reduced General Fund allocations. Fees were raised again in July of 2004 and January 2005. Fees now constitute 39% of the total budget but are a substantially risky funding source, especially considering the recent dramatic rise in gas prices.
- Revenue from State Parks concessions exceeded \$10 million for fiscal year 2003/04, an increase of 9% from the previous year.
- In 2004, 12,000 volunteers donated almost 900,000 hours of time,

### 2004/05 Fiscal Year Budget - Major Funding Sources



talents and energies, a value of over \$15.6 million (based on the U.S. Department of Labor rate of \$17.55 per hour).

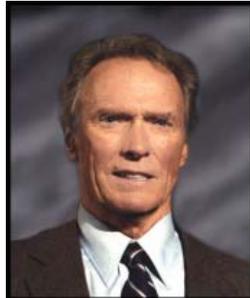
Our non-profit partners have contributed more than \$7 million annually, funding critical staff positions, exhibits, visitor center development, junior ranger and nature walk programs, living history demonstrations, special events and other projects. This non-profit network includes 80 associations with more than 26,000 members in 278 State Parks.

# The California State Park and Recreation Commission

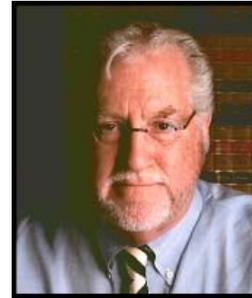
To ensure preservation of the State's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued and natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation, the Park and Recreation Commission approves general plans for units of the state park system, classifies units of the system, establishes general policies to guide the Director in the administration, protection and development of the system, and recommends to the Director a comprehensive recreation policy for the state.



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## **The Beginnings of California State Parks...**

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. 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. His crusade was carried on by other prominent Californians, such as photographer Andrew P. Hill and by members of the new, yet influential Sempervirens Club 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 in 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.

## **Building the System...**

These actions to preserve islands of California's most valuable lands for future generations put the Golden State in the forefront of the preservation movement. With leadership from the Save-the-Redwoods League, a broad coalition of groups and individuals united their collective powers into a new campaign for a state park bill which swiftly gained unanimous approval in the Legislature and was signed into law in 1927.

The following year, a newly-established State Park Commission began gathering support for the first state park bond issue and in 1928 Californians voted nearly three-to-one in favor of a \$6 million park bond act. The new system of state parks rapidly began to grow.

During the 1960s, there emerged an intense public interest in preserving California's wild lands from encroaching development. By a 1.5 million plurality vote, Californians approved a \$150 million bond act in 1964 allowing acquisition of new state park lands. 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. In March 2000, voters passed Proposition 12, the 2.1 billion dollar "Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000" and two years later passed Proposition 40, the 2.6 billion dollar "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002".

## **Today...**

California State Parks represents the most diverse natural and cultural heritage holdings of any land management 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 a substantial percentage of California's magnificent coastline under its care, California State Parks also manages the state's finest coastal wetlands, estuaries, and dune systems.

