



CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING STAFF REPORT COVER PAGE

Loma Linda, CA
December 17, 2025

AGENDA ITEM: Report Only – Waterway Connections Initiative (WCI)

STAFF: Sonya Jones, Strategic Planning and Recreation Services

SUBJECT: Waterway Connections Initiative

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Information only.

II. BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

The Waterway Connections Initiative (WCI) was first funded through the Budget Act of 2021 in the amount of \$154.2M. Per a budget solution, the amount was reduced to \$141.9M. WCI funds must be spent or encumbered by June 30, 2027.

The goal of the WCI is to expand inland waterway-related outdoor access to Priority Communities in California. Priority Communities are identified for the purpose of WCI as communities of 2,500 (or more) near rivers, inland waterways, and inland water systems, and who lack meaningful connection to nature for a variety of reasons. WCI promotes making the outdoors inclusive for all and creating a sense of belonging for Californians. This report will provide an overview of current WCI implementation with information on recreation facility improvement projects, Division of Boating and Waterway's local assistance grants for boat launch facility improvements, community engagement and general planning projects, and grant programs administered by Parks California.

Policy Guidance:

Enabling legislation [SB-170 Budget Act of 2021 \(2021-2022\)](#) reads as follows:

Item 3790-005-0001 is added to Section 2.00 of the Budget Act of 2021, to read:



(1) 2840-Support of the Department of Parks and Recreation: 154,200,000

Provisions:

1. The amount appropriated in this item shall be available for state operations, capital outlay, property acquisition, or local assistance, with a priority for under- resourced, underserved, or park-poor urban communities to expand the presence and activity of the Department of Parks and Recreation facilities and partnerships, including partnerships with local agencies and nonprofit organizations, in urban areas with a connection to the rivers, waterways, and water systems.

2. The amount appropriated in this item shall be available in urban areas adjacent to rivers and waterways throughout the state.

3. The Department of Parks and Recreation shall use the services of the California Conservation Corps or a local conservation corps certified by the California Conservation Corps whenever feasible for its work in this program.

4. The amount appropriated in this item shall be available for encumbrance or expenditure until June 30, 2027.

III. ATTACHMENTS

- Staff Report
- [Waterway Connections Initiative \(WCI\)](#)
- [Central Valley Vision \(CVV\) Document](#)
- [DBW's Boat Launch Facility Grant Program](#)
- [Career Pathways](#)
- [Route to Parks](#)



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OBJECTIVE

Provide an overview of the Waterway Connections Initiative (WCI) and the variety of projects that advance its objectives.

INTRODUCTION

WCI may fund State Park operations (e.g. public education programming, resources management, partnerships), infrastructure development (e.g. campgrounds, picnic areas), real property acquisition, and local assistance. WCI's Guiding Principles inform decisions, objectives, and implementation.

While WCI is a Statewide program, serious consideration is being given to connecting Priority Communities with inland waterway areas which offer opportunities for multi-benefit land and water management, and which typically have significantly less funding availability than coastal areas. Because the Central Valley is home to many Priority Communities, WCI includes and expands recommendations made in State Parks' Central Valley Vision Implementation Plan. (See attachments and additional resources)

DESCRIPTION

WCI is efficiently leveraging existing plans, processes, and programs to strategically advance its objectives in the following categories: Recreation facility improvements and developments, Public education and access, park planning and strategic property acquisitions. Additionally, WCI may provide local assistance for eligible activities through agreements with local government partners.

Here is an overview of all current WCI projects.



Recreation facility improvement and development projects were solicited through Park Operations Division's annual project prioritization process in 2023. The following units and locations have projects underway that will improve and expand public access. These projects are in various stages of contracting, planning, design and construction.

Bethany Reservoir SRA	Delta Meadows	Marshall Gold Discovery SHP	Silverwood Lake SRA
Bidwell Sacramento River SP	Dos Rios	Old Sacramento SHP	Sonoma Coast SP
Brannan Island SRA	George J. Hatfield SRA	Picacho SRA	Turlock Lake SRA
Candlestick Point SRA	Lake Perris SRA	Rio de Los Angeles SRA (Bowtie)	Bethany Reservoir SRA
Caswell Memorial SP	Locke Boarding House	Salton Sea SRA	

The *Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) Boat Launch Facility Program* has dispersed funds for improving and developing boat launches at the following facilities:

Bucks Landing (Marin Co.)	Capell Cove (Napa Co.)	Donner Lake (Nevada Co.)	East Park Reservoir (Colusa Co.)
Fish Lake (Humboldt Co.)	Lake Gregory (San Bernardino Co.)	Lake McClure (Mariposa Co.)	Lake Morena Park (San Diego Co.)
Louis Park (San Joaquin Co.)	Miller Park (Marin Co.)	Wiest Lake (Imperial Co.)	



Public Education and Access

Grant programs administered by Parks California, including *Route to Parks* grants that support underrepresented communities who face challenges getting to or enjoying parks, and Career Pathways grants that create skill development opportunities for the next generation of public land managers.

For *Route to Parks*, Parks California will implement five 1-year grant cycles (2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028). About 20 grants will be deployed per cycle 20 grants per cycle, for an estimated 100 grants total, with an average \$35,000 award amount. For *Career Pathways*, Parks California will implement two grant cycles (June 2024- June 2027, Jan 2026- Jan 2029). About 20 multi-year grants will be deployed with an average \$75,000 per year award amount.

Strategic Property Acquisitions to Improve Public Access

DPR's Acquisition and Real Property Services Division is working to acquire property near Upper Lake Clementine at Auburn SRA. This property is 9.91 acres and contains mixed chaparral and montane hardwood-conifer forests, including riverine and riparian habitats for foothill yellow-legged frog. The primary value of this acquisition is in protecting access to the Upper Lake Clementine Day Use Area since a portion of the property fronts Lake Clementine Road, the sole mode of ingress and egress for land management and public recreational access.

Upper Lake Clementine Road provides the sole route for visitors seeking access to the Upper Lake Clementine Day Use Area by vehicle. The area features a natural swim beach and is the SRA's most concentrated and second most visited day use area. In addition to protecting public access, the acquisition would also allow for the expansion of the swim beach area to provide for safe river recreation, and an opportunity for a new trail alignment, serving an ethnically diverse visitor base from the greater Sacramento area and beyond.

Park Planning

General and recreational planning and community engagement to develop recreation facilities and long-term goals for the following State Park units or locations:

Clear Lake SP	Delta Meadows park property	Dos Rios park property
Great Valley Grasslands SP	Lake Perris SRA	Salton Sea SRA



NEXT STEPS

Continue monitoring and tracking WCI project implementation statewide.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

COMMISSION ACTION(S)

N/A

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Waterway Connections Initiative \(WCI\)](#)

[Central Valley Vision \(CVV\) Document](#)

[DBW's Boat Launch Facility Grant Program](#)

[Career Pathways](#)

[Route to Parks](#)