CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
STAFF REPORT COVER PAGE

Scotts Valley, CA
July 2, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: 09 Planning Update – State Parks Forward

STAFF: Katie Metraux, Strategic Planning and Recreation Services Division

SUBJECT: State Parks Forward

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Informational Only

II. BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

The Governor announced on Earth Day 2026 three new proposed park properties to be added to the State Park System. The initiative is called *State Parks Forward*. This staff report gives an update and next steps on the new acquisitions.

III. ATTACHMENTS

- Staff Report

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CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING STAFF REPORT

Scotts Valley, CA
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STAFF REPORT: Planning Update – State Parks Forward

STAFF: Katie Metraux, Strategic Planning and Recreation Services Division

SUBJECT: State Parks Forward

OBJECTIVE

Share information regarding the new land acquisition initiative *State Parks Forward*.

STATE PARKS FORWARD PROJECT

State Parks Forward is a statewide initiative to significantly expand and strengthen California's state park system by establishing three new properties and adding 30,000 acres to existing parks by the end of the decade. This initiative builds on major recent achievements, including expanding Outdoors for All access programs, advancing progress toward the state's 30×30 conservation goals, streamlining environmental restoration through cutting green tape, and investing over $1 billion in community parks. Together, these accomplishments create a strong foundation for a more connected, equitable, and climate resilient future for all Californians.

On Earth Day 2026, California took a major step forward by proposing three new State Park properties, Feather River Park, the San Joaquin River Parkway, and Dust Bowl Camp, publicly held lands that present a rare opportunity to expand the park system at little to no cost. In parallel, the Department continues to pursue strategic expansions of existing parks in partnership with conservation organizations.

To ensure these new parks are shaped by the people who will enjoy and steward them, the Department is launching a robust, inclusive statewide stakeholder engagement effort. Engagement will occur through a range of tools, including a dedicated project website (parks.ca.gov/Forward), surveys, social media, virtual meetings, community events, and targeted outreach to underrepresented communities. Together, these efforts aim to gather broad

and diverse input from community members, tribal partners, local organizations, and regional stakeholders.

All input will be synthesized into a comprehensive engagement and visioning report documenting the process, key themes, regional needs, and actionable recommendations. This report will guide the Department's planning and development of the new parks and inform how future expansions can increase equitable access, enhance recreation opportunities, and support long-term stewardship of California's open spaces.

State Parks Forward has a public webpage, where you can learn more, sign up, and get involved.

NEXT STEPS FOR PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT (NEXT 3 MONTHS)

1. Public Launch and Awareness Building (Month 1)
    - Promote the project website and "Get Involved" page to introduce the public to State Parks Forward.
    - Begin circulation of fact sheets and introductory materials for the three new park properties.
    - Expand visibility through homepage features, social media, and the Earth Day announcement.
    - Initiate early outreach to property owners, local jurisdictions, community-based organizations, and Tribes.
2. Stakeholder, Partner, and Tribal Engagement (Month 1–2)
    - Conduct focused conversations with key partners, including current property owners, conservancies, nonprofits, education groups, outdoor recreation organizations, and land management partners.
    - Hold listening sessions with Tribal Nations whose ancestral lands intersect with or shape the park properties.
    - Gather technical and site-specific input from regional experts (e.g., ecological, cultural, recreational, accessibility, and water resource specialists).
3. Broad Public Engagement Activities (Months 2–3)
    - Launch online survey(s) to collect widespread input on regional community needs, priorities, and opportunities for the new parks.
    - Host virtual engagement sessions to introduce each property and gather early ideas.

- Begin targeted in-person outreach in communities surrounding the three new properties, with a focus on underserved and historically underrepresented residents.
- Promote opportunities for comment through newsletters, social media, and partner networks.

4. Drafting the Visioning & Engagement Summary (Months 4-5)
   - Compile and analyze all public and stakeholder feedback.
   - Identify recurring themes, community priorities, access needs, ecological considerations, cultural resource guidance, recreational opportunities.
   - Develop preliminary recommendations for each park unit and systemwide considerations for *State Parks Forward*.
   - Prepare a draft engagement report to inform the Ffall 2026 visioning report to the Governor, as outlined in the State Parks Forward deck.
5. Ongoing Public Communication
   - Continue sharing updates through the project website and email sign-ups for future engagement opportunities.
   - Encourage ongoing feedback and maintain transparency as planning advances.

RECOMMENDATION

Informational only

COMMISSION ACTION(S)

N/A

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

N/A