
BEAR FACTS

Planning Trends and Information for California State Parks

JUNE 2001

Visioning Update

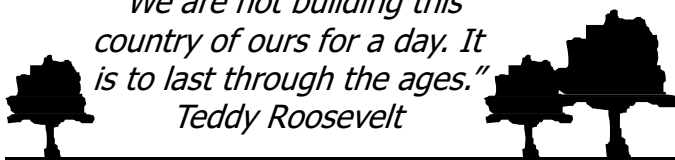
At a recent meeting of the full Executive Staff, Action Plans were presented by team leaders for each of the Strategic Objectives enumerated in the Director's November 14, 2000 memo to all employees. As you may recall, the memo summarized the results of a year-long visioning process to determine the "Paths to Our Future." From this process, involving inputs from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, eight Strategic Objectives were identified:

- ◆ Increase Diversity
- ◆ Increase Leadership in Parks and Recreation
- ◆ Increase Leadership in Natural Resources
- ◆ Focus on Cultural Resources
- ◆ Utilize Technology
- ◆ Develop a New Image
- ◆ Create an Urban Connection
- ◆ Expand Recreation Opportunities

The Executive Staff also identified a number of strategic initiatives for each of the eight objectives and selected a team leader for each objective. Team leaders coordinated small groups of participants who prepared the action plans. After a short period for "fine-tuning," the action plans will be adopted by the Executive Staff and serve as the basis for much of the Department's efforts over the next few years.

*"We are not building this
country of ours for a day. It
is to last through the ages."*

Teddy Roosevelt



Considering California's Future

In long-range planning for parks and recreation, one needs to think about the range of possible futures for California. To do this, it helps to have some frame of reference in which to place the many suggested hypotheses, the available facts, and the analyses as to where the state's most probable future may lie. Those of us who work in the Planning Division, work elsewhere in the Department, or are otherwise concerned about such matters, might give some thought to the future implications of the two very different sets of factors summarized below.

In his new book, *California in the New Millennium*, pollster and social commentator Mark Baldassare believes that California's future will reflect three critical factors which are at work in the state today:

- √ Political distrust – the political process is widely seen as unresponsive, self-indulgent and increasingly irrelevant to the average citizen; this is not a good situation in an ostensibly democratic society;
- √ Racial and ethnic change – diversity is exploding and there is an increasing attitude of retaining and vigorously asserting one's heritage rather than subsuming it into the commonality of some sort of a "melting pot"; and

(continued on page 2)



(“Considering” from page 1)

- √ Regional diversity – the state is no longer socio-economically bipolar (north/south) but instead seems to be splitting into a larger number of distinct areas which are competing for power and resources – San Diego, Los Angeles, the Bay Area, the Inland Empire and the Great Valley, with the latter two growing fastest.

This somewhat pessimistic frame of reference can be contrasted to the somewhat more hopeful and optimistic views of the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy. In the 2001 edition of its *California Economic Growth*, this Bay Area economics thinktank finds three major challenges to the state’s short-run well-being:

- √ We are in an economic recession: although the signals are still mixed, there is currently a slow-down in the California and national economies;
- √ We have energy shortages: there are shortages and resultant high prices and threatened short-term disruptions for natural gas and electricity in California; and
- √ There are three other problems: population growth, wasteful land use and substantial infrastructure deficiencies.

This study believes that the first two challenges (especially the second) will be painful and have sharp political ramifications, but that they will be only short-term problems. In contrast, it believes that the third challenge is by far the most important, that these three items are in fact the most critical long-range problems California faces. How do we best deal with staggering population growth? How do we keep too much valuable land from being developed in a continuation of today’s uncoordinated and often competitive (essentially local) land use planning? How and when will we modernize and expand our seriously deteriorating infrastructure (roads, water, sanitation, airports, etc.), without which California can never do well. Don’t be distracted by the recession or energy shortages, the study says, but focus on the other three matters instead.

With such variables, planning is clearly an inexact science. Still, this is all food for thought, factors to be considered as we try to see what the future holds and where in that future the Department should try to place itself to best serve the public and protect the resources entrusted to us.

A System of Superlatives

The California State Park System is the oldest, largest, most diverse and most heavily visited state park system in the nation.

Among state agencies, the State Park System is the second largest provider of educational services, offering 10.5 million hours of public education in fiscal year ‘99/00 (second to the State Department of Education).

Among state agencies, the State Park System has direct management responsibility over the greatest number of rare and endangered species.

Among state agencies, the State Park System is the largest public service concessions manager - with over 249 concessions that generate over \$73 million in gross revenue and return over \$8 million in rental fees.

Meet the Planning Division

Dropped from the Department during the reorganization of the early 1990s, the Planning Division has recently been re-created. Staff are busy preparing the first *State Park System Plan* in about 20 years, preparing elements of the *California Park and Recreation Master Plan*, and finalizing the *California Trails Plan*. We will be involved in a variety of special studies, statistical reports and departmental task forces that examine important issues. One of our primary goals is also one of the strategic objectives – to reestablish the Department's leadership role in the parks and recreation field.

The Division now consists of 12 people who represent a broad range of experience. From State Park planning, interpretation and field experience to federal, city and local park experience – this team brings knowledge and a broad range of perspectives to the Planning Division.

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California – A Tapestry of Diversity

The much-heralded 2000 census has been completed. The demographers are busy crunching numbers in every meaningful permutation imaginable for information users like California State Parks.

So what's in the numbers? Well, all the details aren't complete, but the trends are apparent and there appears to be no real surprises. There are now nearly 34 million people calling California home. For the first time, the percent of the white, non-Hispanic, population is less than 50%. The percent of the population under age 18 is estimated at 27% and those residents over the age of 65 make up 11% of the population, and their numbers are growing.

There are a variety of sources from which to gather demographic information. The U.S. Census Bureau web site at www.census.gov provides direct access to an enormous amount of data. Topics include information on Census 2000, people, business, geography, news, reference maps, thematic maps, demographic data sets and even a kids' corner.

If you want a snapshot of California demographics try state and county quick facts at <http://quickfacts.census.gov>. If you are interested in mapping you might want to try <http://tiger.census.gov>. From this web site you can locate state, county and city maps along with overlay or theme options.

In addition to the census, the California Department of Finance maintains a site specifically focused on California data at: <http://dof.ca.gov>. This web site is particularly valuable for a variety of applications, giving access to more information than you'd probably ever want.

The demographic information highway is well traveled and the network grows. So have patience; what you want is probably out there. All you'll need is time and a lot of it.

Campers in California

What significance does camping have to local economies? Who is camping at state, federal, local, and private campgrounds? Where does camping fit in the tourism industry?

To answer these questions and more, the members of the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism worked cooperatively to produce the study *Campers in California, Travel Patterns and Economic Impacts*. With a lead from the Department of Tourism, Dean Runyan and Associates conducted surveys and produced the study results in July of 2000.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Camping Trip Satisfaction

- Camping satisfaction is relatively high across all categories.
- Making it easier to reserve camping sites is the top request for all campers.

Early Camping Experiences

- More than eight out of ten campers became interested in camping and spending time outdoors as children.
- More than half of all campers were with parents on their first camping trip.
- Friends and parents have greatly influenced campers' interests in camping and spending time outdoors.

Economic Impacts of Camping

- The total economic impact of camping was \$3 billion in 1999. This includes fees, groceries, restaurants, recreation, and transportation in the vicinity of the campground.
- Expenditures by campers have generally increased throughout the 1990s.
- The majority of all camping expenditures are at private campgrounds.
- More than half of all private camping expenditures is in urban regions and Southern California.
- More than one-third of all public camping (camping at publicly owned facilities) ex-



penditures are in the High Sierra and Central Coast regions.

- All campers spent the largest percentage of their budgets on restaurants and vehicle and fuel costs.
- Private campers spend over two-thirds more on the average camping trip than public campers do.
- Campers at National Parks outspend other public campground users.

Trip Planning Information Sources

- Campers rely most on their knowledge from previous trips.
- The Internet is used by nearly one-quarter of respondents.

Camping Trips in California

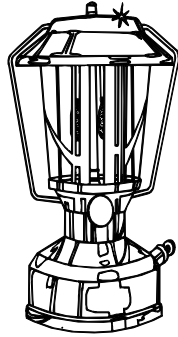
- The majority (87%) of campers are in-state residents.
- Most campers (85%) take trips within the state of California only.
- The majority of camping trips are one week or less.
- Most camping trips are to locations within 300 miles (of home).

Demographics

- Campers are relatively affluent; over two-thirds have annual incomes of \$50,000 or more per year.
- Campers are relatively well educated.
- About one out of eight campers are non-white.

- More than two-thirds of camping parties had two adults; Six out of ten camping parties had no children.
- Over half of all campers have no children at home.
- Few campers are under 30 years old; nearly two-thirds are over 50.

For information about the research methodology or to receive a complete copy of the study, contact the California Department of Tourism, 801 K Street, Suite 1600, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 322-2881.



Power Leisure

With today's high-speed, high-pressure lifestyles, "power leisure" describes the tendency to work hard and play hard.

The term power leisure could apply to action-packed vacations, often sold on their quantity of unique experiences and activities. Adventure travel and high-risk recreation evoke a sense of power and are on the increase.

Technology promotes another connotation of power leisure by allowing people to multi-task at play. With the use of hand-held devices, parents can conduct business while watching the kids' soccer game. Some new exercise machines include a computer and monitor for surfing the web during a workout.

Many people are turning to relaxing activities like yoga, gardening and fishing. But they also look for quick and effective ways to reconnect to themselves – get exercise and get outdoors – relax and recharge – and then get back to busy living.

The Latest from TrendSCANTM

THE MATURING BOOMER WATCH

This is another big year for the baby boom as the earliest members of this cohort turn 55. It is likely that this new milestone will shape the future of this country just as every previous life stage from starting school to having children did.

Ken Dychtwald of Age Wage, the think tank on the "greying" of boomers out of Emeryville, CA, reminds us that the underlying desire and mantra of this group was youth, and if they can no longer be young, they will surely pursue "youthfulness." Dychtwald believes this value will remain an integral part of their agenda as they move into a new life stage; think bifocals without lines, invisible hearing aids, and Viagra-like products.

A survey recently conducted by Del Web Research, the people who brought us the Sun-City retirement communities for the last generation, reveals preferences for services that boomers ranked as being important to them when they are 65. They include:

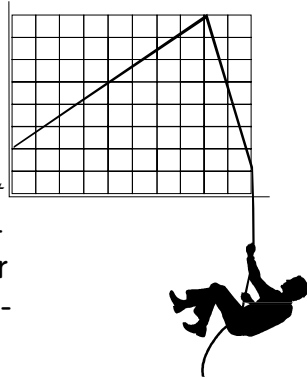
Health care -----	93%
Computer-related-----	80
Legal counsel -----	78
Financial counsel -----	74
Recreation-focused-----	73
Entertainment -----	71
Retirement housing-----	67
Fitness-focused -----	57
Teach new skills-----	56
Travel consultants-----	53
Psychologist -----	33

Note the high levels of focus on recreation, entertainment, and fitness. Parks and recreation can be a major part of this life stage, but only if we make it so.

TrendscanTM is created by Ellen O'Sullivan of Leisure Lifestyle Consulting and is available to members on the California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) web site at www.cprs.org. Comments, questions or suggestions should be directed to Ellen at leisurife@aol.com.

Trends from Performance Management

The annual *California Department of Parks & Recreation Performance Management Report* sheds light on the following trends based on our Department's standard program measures:



NATURAL RESOURCES

- The number of acres of land where natural processes and constituent elements have been restored has dropped from 4,000 acres in 95/96 to 1,500 acres in 99/00.
- Database entries for observations of flora and fauna have risen 11,843 entries in 96/97 to 14,642 entries in 99/00.
- Preservation of paleontological resources and interpretation of such has increased.
- However, visitor perception of the degree that State Parks are protected and preserved has decreased.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Objects recorded into the ARGUS System and documented photographs have increased from 40% in 98/99 to 79% in 99/00 (though the Department had an automated registration system prior to 1995, standardized efforts began then).
- Degree of compliance to the Museum Collections Facilities Index (MCFI) has also increased (these programs have standardized documented data for three years since 1997).

EDUCATION / INTERPRETATION

- Participant hours in interpretive programs, self-guided programs and school programs fluctuate around 10 million per year.
- The degree of congruity with educational curricula has increased based on surveys by educators' survey response.
- The visitors' satisfaction with the quality of programs is decreasing.

FACILITIES

- Public perception of the cleanliness of restrooms and the condition of facilities is relatively stable.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- The ratio of accidents to park visitation is down, and the ratio of crimes to visitors is up.

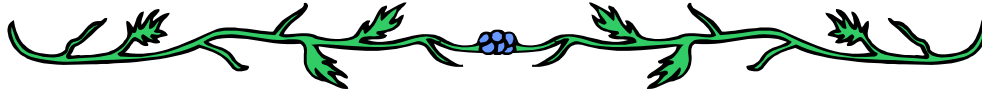
RECREATION

- Visitor satisfaction regarding concession purchases is up
- Satisfaction with the courtesy of park staff is down
- Satisfaction with fees to value is up.

Now the analysis and interpretation starts. How does this apply to you? Questions to ask in evaluating the above information might include:

- Why has the number of acres of restored land been reduced in the past four years? Is funding and staffing adequate for control burns, non-native plant removal, revegetation projects?
- Have we improved our record keeping systems in logging and tracking artifact collections through technological advances and standardization of processes?
- If the attendance is stable in educational and interpretive programs, why are the satisfaction figures showing a downward trend? Are we sacrificing quality for quantity?
- If park visitation is the same, how can accidents be down but crime statistics up? Are emergency medical responses and preventive programs (e.g. boating safety, Jr. Lifeguard programs, OHV inspections) receiving more attention and staff time?
- Can lowered satisfaction with the courtesy of park staff be attributed to increased workload, inadequate orientation and training, lack of adequate supervision, and/or the tight market for qualified labor?

None of these questions are easy to answer. This data is food for thought and evaluation and allows park leaders to take the next step in quality improvement.



California is Less Green Than You Think

An April 2001 poll by the *Los Angeles Times* provides some interesting information on the public's current views on selected environmental and social issues. This poll provides information for the nation as a whole, for its four broad regions (north, south, east, west), the "mountain west", and for California, Oregon and Washington individually. Here are a few interesting results of that poll.

Forty three percent of all Californians think we are going in the correct direction environmentally, while 47% think we are on the wrong track. This closely reflects the national figures. The east, the midwest and the south, as well as Washington and Oregon are less pleased than we are, while the mountain west is most satisfied.

Protecting the environment is relatively low on the list of broad public concerns, ranking fourth below (in order) economy/jobs, crime/drugs and education. Surprisingly, in this context, no group places the environment lower than does California. The east values it almost three times more highly, while Oregon and Washington show double our support.

In looking at which environmental issues are most important to the respondents, parks, recreation and open space don't rate highly enough to be among the top four. The top four issues are pollution, air quality, global warming/ozone layer and energy production. California's concerns happen to be in the order listed above, with pollution being far more important than the other three.

In setting the priority between environmental protection and economic growth, every geographic

group gives more weight to the former. California closely reflects the nation as a whole, with 52% favoring the environment and 36% favoring the economy. Stronger pro-environment support can be found in the east and in Washington.

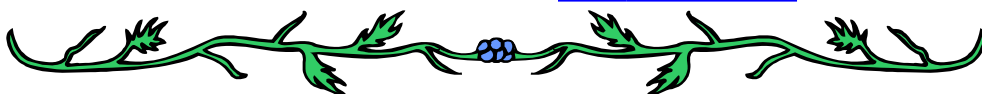
Regarding National Parks (not state parks), Californians preferred upgrading existing facilities (53%) to expanding the parks (45%), but they did give more support to expansion than did most other geographic areas.

As to charging recreation user fees in National Forests (again, not state parks), Californians were more supportive (62%) than were most other geographic areas.

Looking at the survey's 51 questions as a group, it seems clear that California is generally environmentalist in its views but, depending on the issue at hand, is very often only the third or fourth most "green" group among the states or regions identified in the survey. Often, we are no more green than the national average.

One can speculate on the reasons behind the state's surprisingly middle-of-the-road position on a variety of environmental issues. It may be because California is now home to a large number and wide variety of newcomers, whose heritage, outlook and modest incomes make many environmental concerns relatively unimportant. It may be because of Californians' increasing distrust of the political process and of the things that government does. There may be other and better explanations.

Those wishing to view a copy of the basic survey results and the Times' analysis of them can contact the newspaper at its web site at <http://www.latimes.com>.



Bear Facts

is published in June, October, and February of each year by the Planning Division of California State Parks

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More Superlatives

Among state agencies, the State Park System is the second largest law enforcement agency with 735 peace officers (second to the Highway Patrol/State Police).

The State Park System operates the largest statewide lifeguard program, with 76 Lifeguard peace officers and over 500 seasonal lifeguards. It also provides the greatest amount of inland boating opportunities in California.

The State Park System manages more than 49,200 acres of old growth redwood, or 58% of what remains in the world.

The State Park System includes more than 6,500 registered archeological sites.

Among state agencies, the State Park System provides the greatest number of film locations.

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