Annual Report to the Governor on the State Park System

2004 - 2005

by the

California State Park and Recreation Commission

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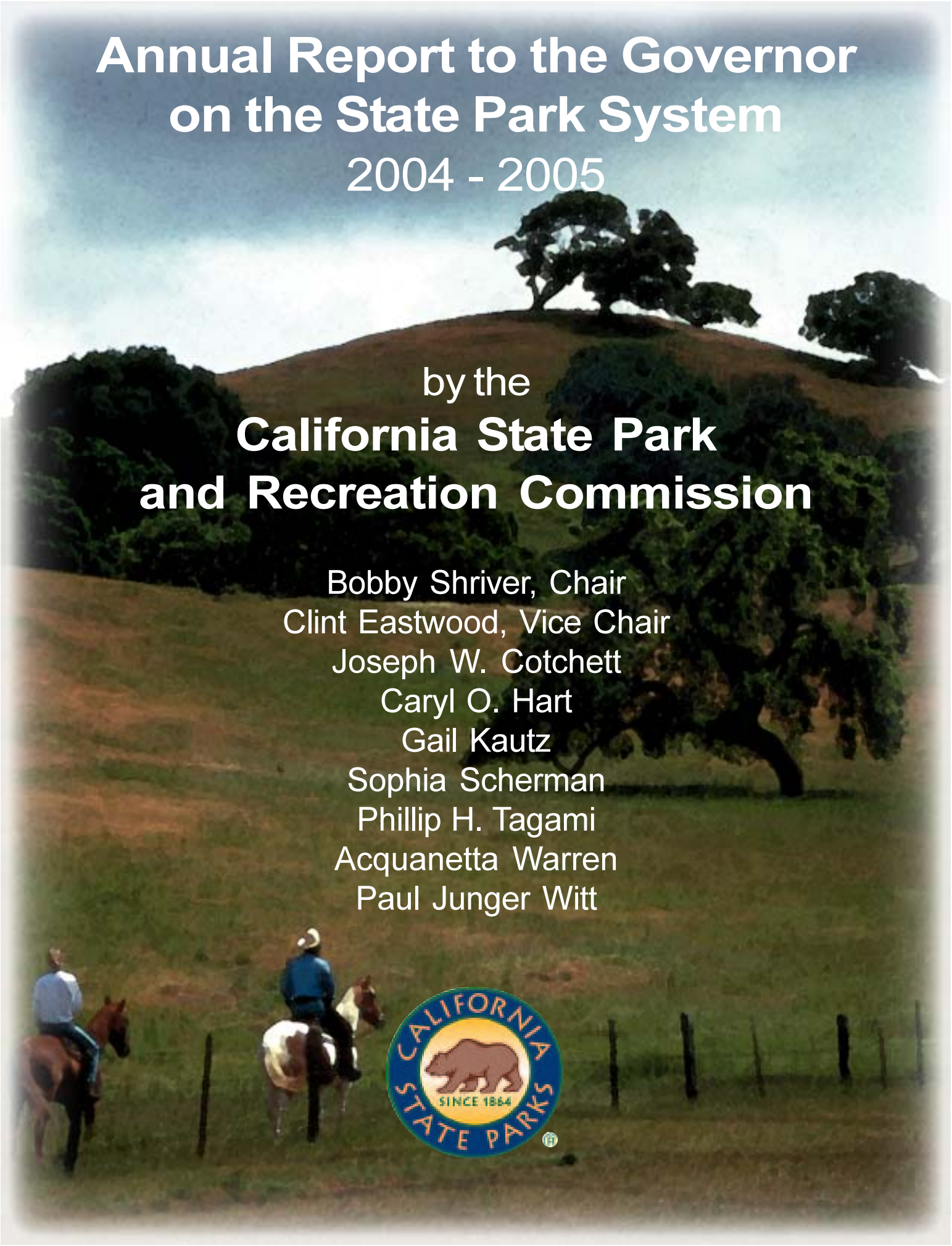


Public Resources Code Section 535

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 Facts

- 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 percent of the total area of California.
- State Park lands include more than 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.
- More than 81 million people visited California State Parks in the 2003-2004 fiscal year. At 1 ounce per person, that equals more than 600,000 gallons of sunscreen!
- California State Parks employs about 3,000 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 people
- 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.
- 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 on the State of the State Park System

Ruth Coleman, Director

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.

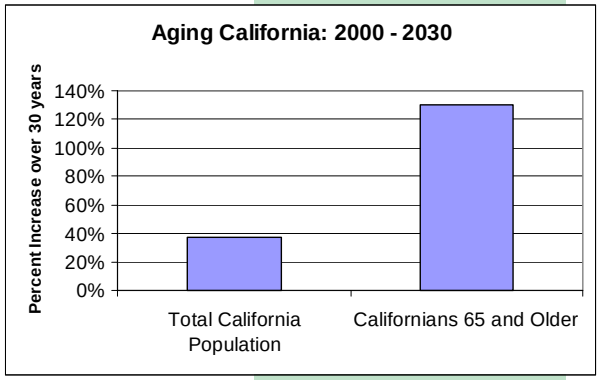
The obstacles we face in achieving our goals include dramatic increases in our state's population, even greater increases in the numbers of park visitors, Department funding levels that have not kept pace, a seriously crumbling infrastructure and degradation of our state's most valued natural and cultural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

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

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 becoming overweight.
- The population increase (currently 1.5 percent annually) is occurring in California's urban centers, with the greates 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.

Carpinteria State Beach in Santa Barbara County



Visitors take a hike at Mount Tamalpais State Park in Marin County

Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area in San Luis Obispo County

Rapid growth in visitation to California's park and recreation areas is already enormous and continues to grow. A 9 percent increase since 1999-2000. Since September 11, 2001, Californians have been 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 2003-2004. Seven million of those camped overnight.

Off-Highway Vehicle Demand

- California State Parks attracts the largest number of off-highway vehicle enthusiasts in the nation. Between 1994 and 2004, reported attendance at State Vehicular Recreation Areas increased by 156 percent, jumping from 1.5 million to 3.8 million visitors.

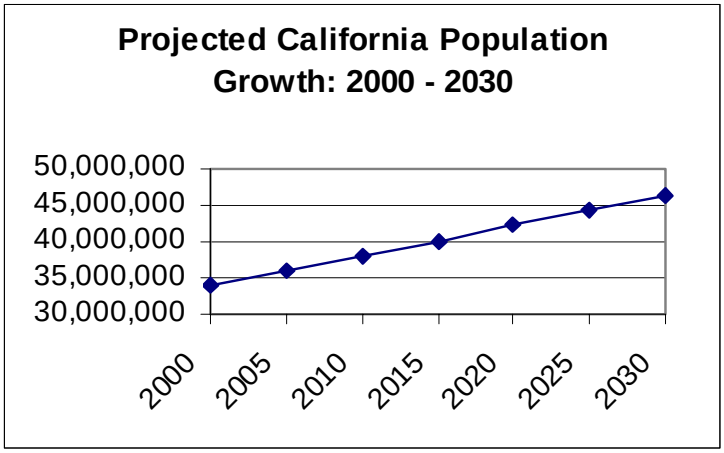
- A 383 percent increase in off-road vehicles in the past 25 years, has created an unprecedented demand for local off-highway vehicle recreation opportunities. Where are these Californians going to go?

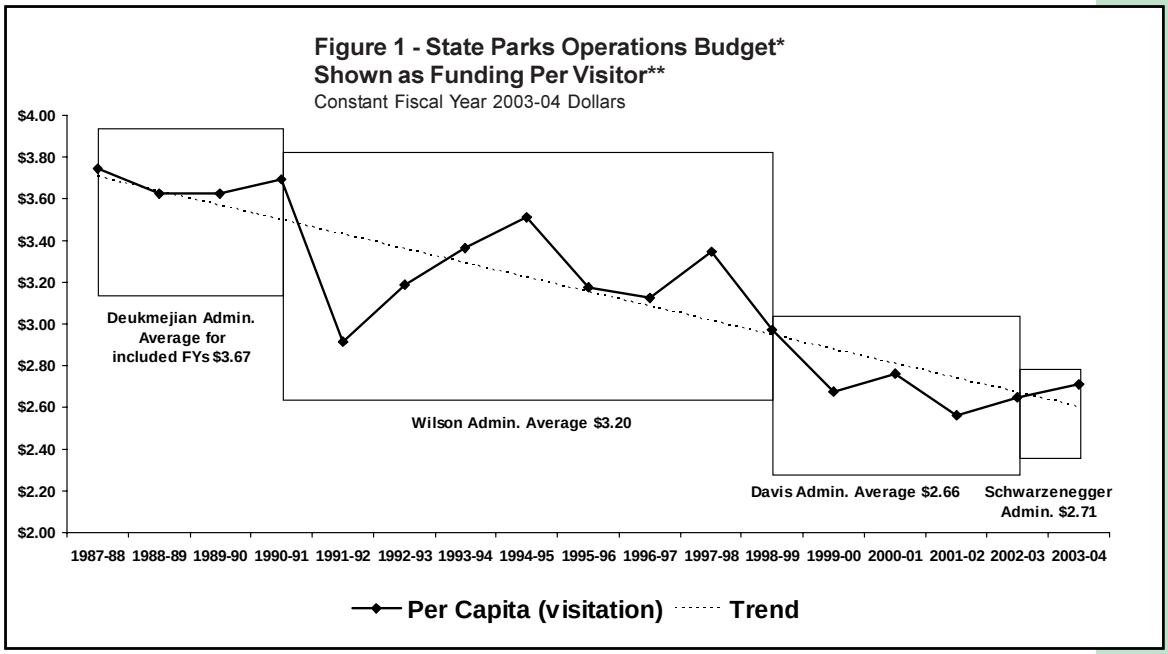
Inadequate Funding

- Despite significant increases in the California population and visitation, the Department's funding levels have not kept pace.

- From fiscal year 1987-1988 to 2003-2004:
  Our State's population increased 31 percent
  Park visitors increased by about 50 percent
  State Park System acreage increased 15 percent

- At the same time, growth in the Department's budget and staffing has been insufficient to keep pace with increased visitation.





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

Point Lobos State Reserve in Monterey County

- Inadequate funding reduces our ability to control invasive plant and animal species and maintain our historic structures. In addition, it could reduce public access to state parks through park closures and resource degradation (see Figure 1).

- Reduced access and closure of California State 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 State Park 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.

Current Goals

Urban Parks

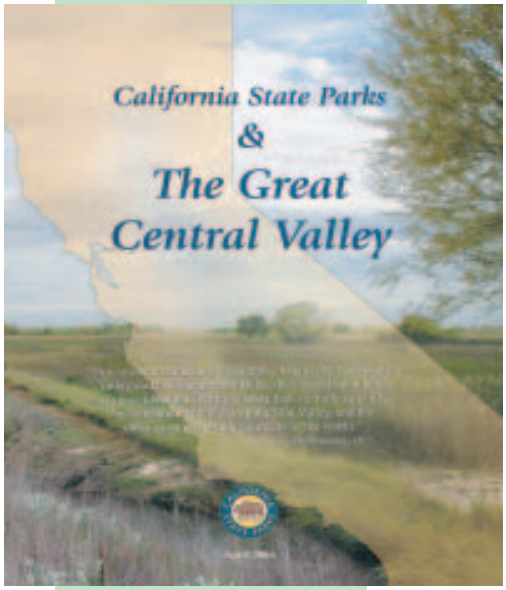
- The State Park System must respond to changing demographics to meet California's needs, especially in urban areas.

New Recreation Opportunities

- Families and seniors need more group/large-family camping and alternative camping facilities.

Pío Pico State Historic Park in Los Angeles County

Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park in El Dorado County



Cover of the Central Valley Vision Publication

Beach Play Day 2005 at Huntington State Beach in Orange County

- California State Parks will continue to promote healthier physical and mental lifestyles through the use of trails, outdoor programs and facilities, and by educating the public on available opportunities.

- Recreation combined with related interpretation and education programs can teach visitors about leading healthy lifestyles, while protecting the natural and cultural heritage of California State Parks. This is especially true for children.

Deferred Maintenance

- Aging facilities need deferred maintenance projects funded and completed.

- Deferred maintenance increases liability, health and safety risks, as well as 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 California 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, yurts and other facilities more convenient for older visitors. The Department also has an aggressive program for providing accessible camping and other forms of recreation.

Combating the Obesity Epidemic

- To help combat the obesity epidemic, 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, with many areas open to cyclists and equestrians.

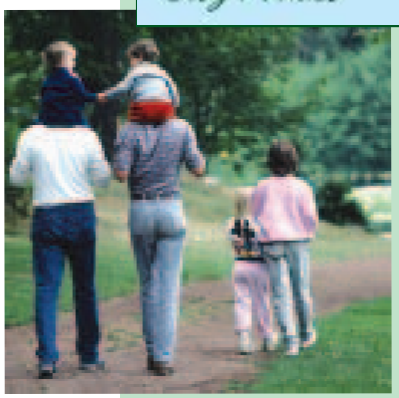
Serving Urban Youth

- We recognize 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.

- Urban youth with good grades have the thrill of riding an off–highway vehicle. This has been made possible by our new partnership with the Police Activities League.

- 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 with 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

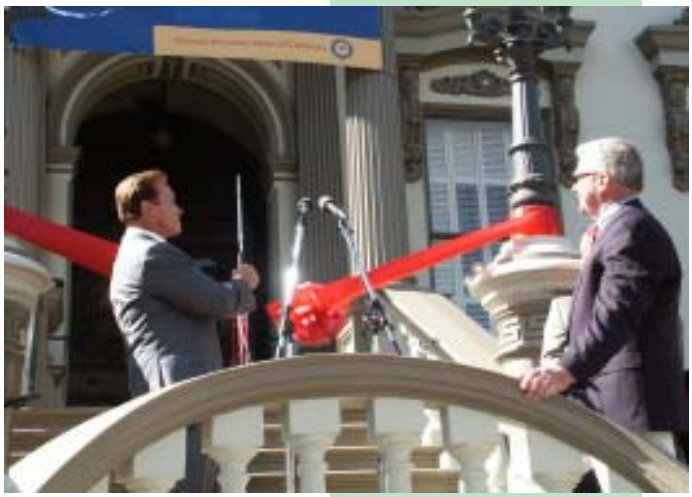
California State Parks' recent accomplishments in acquisition and development span the length and breadth of the state:

- 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 percent), the Leland Stanford Mansion Foundation and the Stanford Mansion Campaign (40 percent) - 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.

- Acquiring *1,500 Hearst Ranch acres and 18 miles of shoreline* around Hearst Castle from a private gift helped to expand an already magnificent property.

- Acquiring the *4,000-acre Vallecitos Ranch addition to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park* cost $4 million. Of that amount, $2.2 million came from private gifts and non-profit agency grants.



Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger prepares to cut the ribbon with videographer Huell Howser at the restored Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park in Sacramento County

First Lady Maria Shriver speaks at the opening of the California's Remarkable Women exhibit in Sacramento

San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area in Merced County

Rio de Los Angeles State Park

Acquisition and Development

- *Rio de Los Angeles State Park, State Recreation Area*, provides critical open space to urban residents in the state's largest city.

- The *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

- California State Parks also understands that federal, 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 approved eight California State Park general plans in 2004, helping the Department further promote camping, boating, swimming and newer forms of recreation while continuing to protect critical environmental resources. The plans encompassed:

- 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

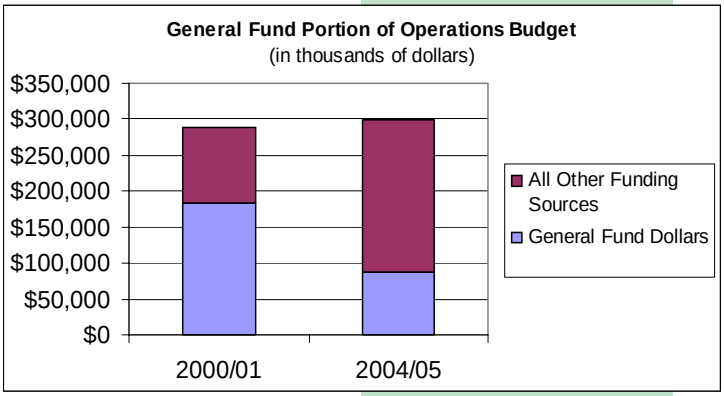
- In the past four years, California State Parks has reduced its reliance on General Fund dollars by more than 30 percent.

- In response to the budget crisis, the Department raised day-use and camping fees in July 2003 to help compensate for reduced General Fund allocations. Fees were raised again in July 2004 and in January 2005. Fees now constitute 39 percent 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 2003-2004, an increase of 9 percent from the previous year.

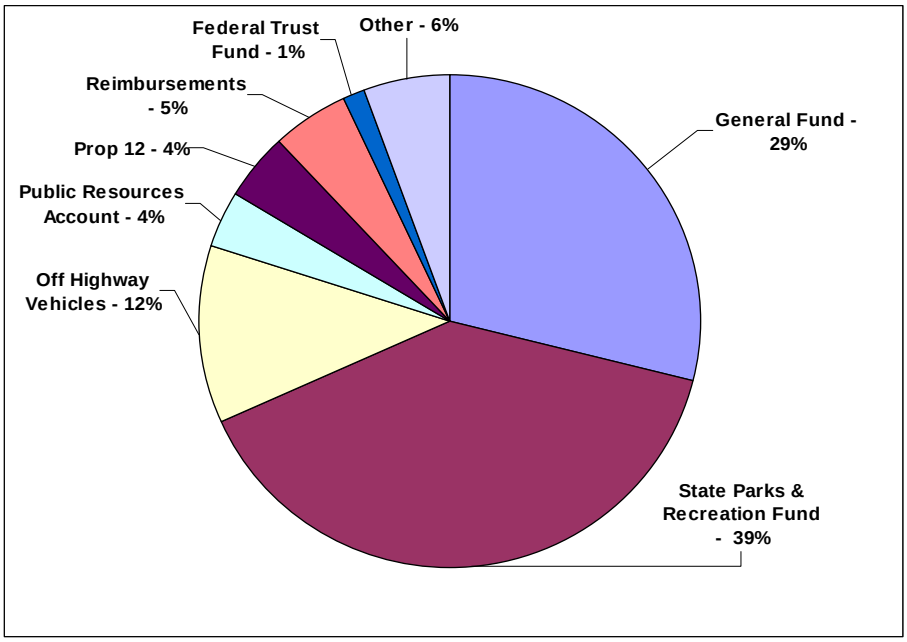
- In 2004, 12,000 volunteers donated almost 900,000 hours of time, talents and energies, a value of over $15.6 million, based on the U.S. Department of Labor rate of $17.55 per hour.

- 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.



El Capitan State Beach in Santa Barbara County

Big Basin Redwoods State Park in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties



2004/05 Fiscal Year Budget - Major Funding Sources

History

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 were erupting on the landscape, fueled by the riches of California's abundant deposits of gold and silver. 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.

Candlestick Point State Recreation Area in San Francisco County

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 "Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000." Two years later, voters passed Proposition 40, the $2.6 billion "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002."

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in Humbolt and Del Norte counties

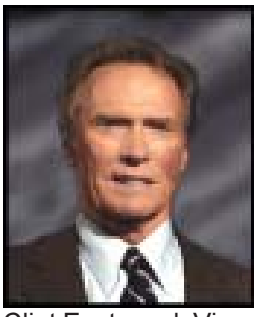
Today...

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 one third of California's magnificent coastline under its care, California State Parks manages the state's finest coastal wetlands, estuaries, and dune systems.

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.

Bobby Shriver, Chair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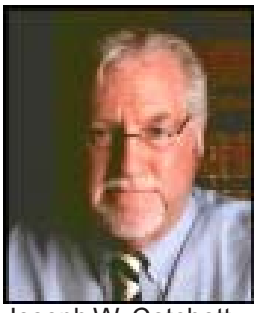
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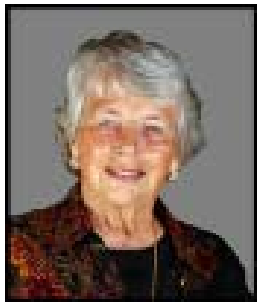
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CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

SINCE 1864