



## Proposed State Park Closures & Staff Reductions Talking Points

### THE FACTS

- 48 state parks have been proposed for closure, including: (See attached list)
  - 17 state parks
  - 17 state historic parks and museums
  - 3 state beaches
  - 9 state recreation areas
  - 2 state reserves
- 16 state beaches in Santa Cruz, Orange and San Diego Counties have also been slated to have significantly-reduced lifeguard staffing on those beaches (See attached list)
- These two actions result in a savings to the state of about \$8.8 million, but require the state to forgo at least \$4.8 million of revenue it would have otherwise brought in through visitation to the 48 closed parks.

### TALKING POINTS

- This proposal to shutter 48 state parks and pull lifeguards off 16 heavily-used, popular California beaches is drastic and unprecedented.
- The 48 parks slated for closure represent 17 percent of the entire state park system.
- Visitation at the 16 state beaches that will have reduced lifeguard staffing represents more than 30 percent of the visitation to the entire state park system. (In 06-07, there were 24.5 million visits to the state beaches, and 79 million visits to the entire system.)

#### *Impacts on Californians*

- These actions will shut out at least 6.5 million Californians from **their** state parks.
- At a time when state residents need low-cost, accessible places for recreation, fitness, education, or simply an experience with nature, closing down state parks is absolutely the wrong thing to do and a huge mistake.
- California's parks and beaches remain as popular as ever. Demand for state parks is increasing, not decreasing. When reservations opened last November for Memorial Day Weekend 2008, park demand broke a record with over 8,400 reservations made in a single day. (Parks that have sold out or are 90% at capacity for that popular weekend are affected by this proposal, including Seacliff State Beach (SB), Bolsa Chica SB, Doheny SB, San Clemente SB, San Elijo SB, and South Carlsbad SB.)

#### *State Parks and Local Economic Activities*

- In many areas, the state park is a critical and prominent driver to the local economy.
- In general, for every \$1 spent supporting the state park system, \$2.35 is returned to the state's General Fund in the form of economic activity from park visitors, through purchases in local economies and in the state parks themselves.

- Equally important, however, is that the state park is often a key association or landmark for the local area – part of its identity and character.

#### *Increasing User Fees as an Alternative to Closures*

- Current users of the state park system are already bearing a significant portion of the burden in keeping California's state park system open and available. In 2007, user fees accounted for \$122 million of the state park system's budget, and in 2008 user fees are expected to account for more than one-quarter of the total budget for the state park system.
- It is appropriate to ask users to pay for the benefits they derive from the state park system. But they are already paying for that benefit.
- Any fee increase must consider the risk of pushing Californians to a point where they cannot afford to visit state parks, and therefore, won't go. We strongly oppose any fee increases that would cause that result.
- Fee increases must come with some improvements for users. Park users cannot be expected to pay an increasing amount for inadequate or declining services.

#### *Using Proposition 84 Funding to Avoid Closures*

- The \$400 million in Proposition 84 funds for state parks can only be used for facilities and capital projects. It cannot be used for basic staffing, maintenance and operations of the state park system.
- The very reason that voters support park bonds is because they feel the money will be used to improve and augment the state park system in order to keep it available for future generations. That is generally why voters agree to bond such expenses – in effect, doing the work now and incurring some debt in the future, because future generations (who will help pay bond obligations) will also be the beneficiaries of such improvements.
- Voters did not support Prop 84 in order to substitute for the public sector's basic commitment and obligation to the state park system. Prop 84 funds cannot and should not be used for that purpose.

#### *Next Steps*

- The Governor's budget proposal is only the beginning of several months of budget negotiations – the park closures he's proposed are not final, and it is not definite that any of the parks will be closed.
- Californians throughout the state will be mobilizing to urge the Legislature to reject these proposals. We invite park supporters in our community to join in the fight. Visit [www.savestateparks.org](http://www.savestateparks.org).

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