

Nature Notes

by Patricia Clark-Gray



Voices from the Wilderness

By the California State Park Rangers Association (CSPRA) Board Members, President, Vice President and Executive Manager: Nina Gordon, Don Schmidt, Pat Clark-Gray, Chris Corey, Mark Hada, Karyn Lombard, Allison Pedley, Lynn Rhodes, Sara Skinner

California State Parks belong to the people of California and the world. Since establishing the first state park in 1864 they have been known as "preserving the best of California forever". Visionary citizens and lawmakers from the turn-of-the-century fought tirelessly to preserve California's most representative and signifi-

cant lands so they might be enjoyed by and not lost to future generations. The California State Park Rangers Association (CSPRA), a 47 year old organization of State Park professionals, believes that our parks should never be closed and that a funding solution must be determined. California citizens are owners of the State Parks. To close even one park, breaks the citizens' and voters' trust. We believe, in keeping

with the Department's mission, that a modified operational model along with restructuring could allow parks to remain open while seeking stable budget fundamentals.

The people of California expect better strategies from legislators and state officials that do not result in park closures. Since 1928, and until the recent economic downturn, the public has overwhelmingly voted to support funding to acquire, protect and preserve California's state parks. It is counterproductive to close

73,475 in 2009. Local agencies are already short staffed. Are they ready to handle the increased workload and mutual aid responsibilities?



make a profit. They were acquired for the public good, located and operated to maximize natural and cultural resource protection, public enjoyment and recreational opportunities. Profit is contradictory to their purpose. Recent legislation now allows, under certain conditions, non-profit organizations, counties, cities, and businesses to assist in park management. Aside from running the profitable aspects

of a park operation (campgrounds, parking lots and concessions) there are also requirements for the essential infrastructure, law enforcement, natural and cultural resource protection and educational aspects. These are the aspects most in

need of protection. These are the aspects which do not provide revenue but are most expected by the public, for the peoples' parks to be, remain, and continue as the best of California forever. Parks belong to us, our children, our grandchildren and the next generations to come. The National Trust for Historic Preservation listed the California State Park system as a whole, on their list of America's Most Endangered Places. Do not let them become extinct. Tell lawmakers and state officials California State Parks are yours and must not be closed.

CSPRA is a non-profit organization of State Park professionals. Contact and organizational information can be found at <http://www.cspra.com>



park. Open parks help to protect invaluable resources, improve local and state economies and create and sustains jobs.

In 2009 visitation to California State Parks generated nearly \$7 billion to California's economy. Last year there were approximately 80 million visitors to the state parks. Closing them will depress the economy in local areas and will negatively affect jobs and local businesses.

Closing a state park will place an increased burden on local sheriff and police departments who will be required to respond to rising crimes in abandoned state parks where protection staff is no longer present. Crimes in State Parks have risen from 23,134 in 1998 to over

to the break-down of an already deteriorating infrastructure of roads, water treatment plants, historic structures, public facilities and restrooms. The deferred maintenance backlog is over \$1 billion. California State Parks must continue to address these maintenance and facility issues regardless of a park's open or closed status.

California State parks were not acquired in order to

order to



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