

News - May 13, 2011

Message from CALPA President Carolyn Schoff

Dear CALPA members and state park supporters,

Friday, May 13, 2011 was a landmark and tragic day for California State Parks. For the first time in the history of the state park system, a permanent closure list naming 70 state parks was released. While we have battled "proposed" state park closures for the past several years, this list is not a proposed list but an actual list of parks slated for closure.

Although it is unclear what this means exactly, information from state parks indicates that these parks will remain open at their current operating level through September, at which time, they will begin the ramping down process leading up to caretaker status (indicating they will not be open to the public), which will take place on or before July 1, 2012. No date for reopening any of the 70 parks on the list has been given.

Ironically, timing on the release of this closure list was fortuitous. At the exact moment of the release of park closure list, over 150 representatives from state park nonprofits and state park staff were attending the annual CALPA conference in Mendocino, California.

CALPA Conference attendees took this difficult news and turned it into an opportunity to bond together in our resolve to save our state parks. We realized that existing models and modes of operation are no longer feasible nor functional. We utilized this opportunity to tap into some of the brightest and best minds in state park partners. Indeed the remainder of the conference focused on new and innovative ways of saving our parks.

Together with other partners like California State Parks Foundation and Save the Redwoods League, we stand ready to mobilize forces, create new paradigms and partnerships, develop new modes of operation, and move forward to save our parks.

Many have asked us what they can do now to help. First, we ask that you all join us in responding to the action alert set forth by the California State Parks Foundation and write your local legislators. More information on this action alert is available online at www.calparks.org/parkclosures/.

Secondly, we suggest you all visit your local state parks and utilize your vacation time to explore those parks further away from your home. I challenge each and every one of you over the next six months, to visit each of the 70 state parks slated for closure. Rather than seeing this as a last opportunity to see these 70 parks, you should see it as the beginning of a new connection to these parks and a symbol of your ongoing commitment to save our state parks, now and for future generations. As President of the Friends of Pio Pico, nonprofit arm to one of the parks slated for closure, I invite you to come visit our little park in Los Angeles.

Lastly, I invite you to participate in our efforts to help the nonprofit partners of state parks. Members of the CALPA board are currently engaged in a variety of projects designed to help Cooperating Associations build their capacity and capability to become better state park partners. One of these projects is an extensive online Co-op Manual. We invite you to [review the proposed sections of the manual](#) and add your suggestions of subtopics we need to cover. In addition, all CALPA members are invited to serve on the appropriate committees of the CALPA board of directors.

As we receive more information on the state parks closures and additional ways you can help avoid them, we will keep you informed.

We all stand together to protect our state parks, and together, we can make a difference. Rather than feeling defeated, this is an opportunity for all of us to step up and help develop a new model for state parks. We hope you will join us in this quest.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Schoff
President, California League of Park Associations