



# CALIFORNIA LEAGUE OF PARK ASSOCIATIONS

*Partners in park sustainability, education and advocacy!*

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## CALPA Applauds Efforts of Little Hoover Commission for a New Vision for California State Parks System

With the release of its report, *Beyond Crisis: Recapturing Excellence in California's State Park System*, the Little Hoover Commission (a bipartisan and independent state agency)([www.lhc.ca.gov](http://www.lhc.ca.gov)) has set forth a much needed revisioning of the California State Parks system and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), the state government agency tasked with operating the system. The California League of Park Associations (CALPA) applauds these efforts and looks forward to further exploration of the commission's recommendations and the role of state park nonprofit partners in this new model of California State Parks.

Since 1983, CALPA has served as the umbrella organization for nonprofit cooperating associations and partners of California State Parks. Its members include organizations that range in size, configuration and capacity, including all volunteer organizations and those with paid staff, all which support one or more of California's 280 state parks.

As longtime park partners throughout the state, member organizations of CALPA have stepped up to deal with the state park crisis that has unfolded over the past few years, spearheading efforts both locally and statewide to prevent park closures and declining park services - proving to be successful in keeping their parks open in the short-term.

While the commission's report does not offer immediate solutions to fix the ailing park system, it outlines several aspects of the crisis and offers insightful recommendations that could potentially reguide and realign the California State Parks System on a forward path to long-term excellence.

"CALPA appreciates the opportunity that we have had to offer testimony on the role our nonprofits have and can play in the California State Parks system, and we support many of the commission's findings," says Carolyn Schoff, President of CALPA. "While some of the proposed solutions may be controversial and challenging, we are at a point where we need to consider all solutions with the ultimate goal of preserving and providing access to our California State Parks for now and for future generations." Important points which deserve further exploration and consideration include the need for:

- Reaffirmation that the state parks system is not and should not be expected to be financially self-sustaining as the missions of revenue generation and resource protection/preservation are not always compatible and must be co-managed carefully.
- A more transparent system that includes accountability and public visibility of decisions that impact parks, citing the development of the 2011 closure list of 70 parks as a prime example of a process that lacked such transparency.
- Restoration of general funds and a call for revenue generation to be promoted and used as a supplement to general funds, allowing for a focus on deferred maintenance and development that has been neglected over the years due to this revenue supplanting general funds.
- Refocusing the state park culture away from an emphasis on law enforcement and monolithic configurations and towards a more innovative and individual approach to finding solutions that best fit each park entity.
- DPR to move away from a state agency centric model, towards an enterprise-based model that accepts and embraces outside park partners as equal co-managers of park entities.
- Re-evaluation of all California State Parks holdings (with public and state park commission oversight) and a determination of which parks should remain in the state parks system and which would be better served by local ownership and/or management.

CALPA and its nonprofit park partners stand ready to collaborate with DPR in this newly envisioned state parks system that belongs to all Californians.

May 16-19, 2013, CALPA will hold its annual conference in Sacramento, appropriately entitled: *Moving Forward from Angst to Awesome: Striving for Excellence in Partnership*. This conference will serve as a forum to continue discussions of the role of nonprofit partners in the reconfiguration of a new California State Parks System.