



Whitewater Program Public Input

January 24, 2019 | Gold Trail Grange, Coloma, CA

CONCESSIONAIRES

1. What's working well?

- DPR is reasonable, Mike Howard's on-going communications, working with the industry
- Holly is an asset
- Current system is in-line with other permitting systems, would like to keep current system
- Current fee structure
- Consider the fee structure from BLM
- Would like the same amount of outfitters, non-control mid-week starts
- The lack of a financial bidding process, current year-to-year security
- Keeping communication lines open with El Dorado County

2. What can be improved?

- Current system doesn't work for the non-profits and they should be considered separately from outfitters and institutional (schools)
- Improvements can be made along the river for education, wayfinding, more instructional and "what not to do" info
- Simplify or eliminate the draw process, freeze at current use (take into consideration all outfitter sizes)
- Create clear definitions for non-profits and institutions
- Permit process needs flexibility for other recreation types, more specific language (kayak instruction, kayak rental, other non-motorized watercrafts)
- Separate south fork from the north and middle fork
- Charge a fee at the south take out and at put in, no concession contract
- Apply a fee to private boaters (equally distributing the fee structure)
- Fees should go back into the resources where the fees were collected (Salmon Falls)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get rid of trip report slips, create an online system for daily reports • More of a partnership between the state and public on clean-up events and facility repair
3.	Can you suggest resources for whitewater management best practices?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • El Dorado County, South Fork • Tuolumne, Merced, Trinity, Kern, • First-hand experience on the river • Create Outfitter advising committee to give input • Colorado, Maine, Idaho – state managed white water systems • Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board
4.	General Input
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate lower middle and north fork • Look at trailer access at skunk hollow • Keep state park facilities presentable, proper staffing for oversight • More funding from DBW • Salmon falls takeout is a safety hazard
PUBLIC	
1.	How can your experience be improved?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Access to the river with boats and gear, more infrastructure • Skunk hollow needs more parking or alternatives to parking (shuttle service) • Better accessibility at Salmon Falls and Marshall Gold; beach wheelchairs • Manage use conflict at Salmon Falls between concessionaires and private use – informational signs • Population growth is impacting the use at Salmon Falls and Skunk Hollow • Increase cleaning schedule on restrooms
2.	What are the community’s concerns or suggestions?
	No input
3.	General Input
	No input

Written Input by Received by February 4, 2019

1. *Nate Rangel, President of Raftcalifornia and California Outdoors*

Outfitter Testimony – January 24, 2019

Good morning Mr. Zucker and Superintendent Howard. My name is Nathan Rangel and I am President of Raftcalifornia, one of your concessionaries, as well as President of California Outdoors, our state commercial river outfitting trade association. I have been a member of your Outfitter Advisory Committee for most of the past three decades, and was also a member of the California Parks and Recreation Commission from 1993 thru 1999.

Last Thursday, January 17th, 24 of my colleagues representing 15 Parks concessionaires met here in Lotus to discuss the changes that Parks is implementing for both the 2020 season as well as beyond. An additional two outfitters called and/or wrote to us giving us their explicit approval to move forward with the actions which we, as an industry, are seeking. I have been tasked by all of my colleagues to share with you our interests, concerns, hopes for the future and also to ask some specific questions so that we can better understand Parks goals and core values as we enter this new phase in our partnership with you.

We felt it was important to give you a brief background on both our collective and my individual history as regards the Auburn State Recreation Area and the river recreation which we jointly offer. Parks first issued permits for commercial access to the North and Middle Forks of the American in 1982. That year there were 6 permits issued. Three years later, in 1985, there were 57 permits issued. That rapid growth, both in terms of numbers of companies as well as the total number of people accessing the resource, caused members of our industry in 1984 to ask Parks to start implementing some use restrictions. That led Parks to hire a consultant to do studies and, eventually, produce a Draft River Management Plan in 1987, most components of which were adopted as part of the current Interim Resource Management Plan for ASRA. That draft plan was a result of

months of negotiations with affected stakeholders. I, along with Steve Liles, who was then the owner of WET River Trips, represented the commercial outfitters during that process. We think it's important to specifically point out that we, as an industry, actually requested Parks to place a real limitation on how much revenue we could extract from our operations on those two rivers. In short, as regards the protection and enhancement of those resources we believe we share the same mission as Parks. And we believe that our decades long partnership with Parks is an important component to both honor, and recognize, as we move forward in this new process.

Following are some of our specific core interests that we would like to share with you.

First, we believe it is important to have a system in place that allows access to those rivers to all of the existing concession contract holders. Different size companies bring a different history, culture and experience to their offerings, and as such we would request at least the same amount of access that we currently have.

Second, we would like to conduct – either on our own or with Parks' assistance – a draw for the NFA and MFA for the 2019 season which would utilize the 2018 use figures for those two rivers. We feel that that is an important component for at least this coming year.

Third, we would like to ask Parks to delay, by one year, the proposed schedule for an issuance of RFPs, etc. so that we can proceed with a more permanent solution that will meet both Parks and our interests and responsibilities.

Fourth, we are wondering if Parks can, under Public Resources Code section 5080.05, issue ongoing 3 year concession contracts to the existing concessionaires at our current use levels without having to utilize an RFP and responsible bidder process.

Fifth, we would like to request that Parks investigate the possibility of contracting with El Dorado County Parks and Recreation to have them manage and collect fees for the Salmon Falls takeout on the lower South Fork of the American. As the lead managing agency the County regulates issuance of permits and, as such, it would seem that their handling of that takeout makes the most sense. Informal discussions that we have had with County Parks personnel has indicated an interest on their part to look at such an arrangement.

Following are some questions we would like to ask. If you could we appreciate any feedback you can offer on these.

First, can you tell us why Parks is pursuing the current indicated action of moving towards an RFP and bidder process?

Second, (and this I'll ask if it's still relevant at that point), why couldn't we go with 3 year contracts without the RFP/Bid process.

Third, if Parks does move forward with an RFP would Parks possibly be willing to issue contracts to all the existing concessionaires if they all submitted responsive bids?

Fourth, if Parks does move forward with an RFP would you consider a Master Concession Contract as a possible viable option as a long-term solution to this process?

Fifth, if Parks moves forward with an RFP could you give us a general outline of your decision making matrix for awarding contracts?

Sixth, would Parks consider either possible support of or, at the very least, a possible position of neutrality for legislation which would give both Parks and our industry a five year extension on allowing the current contracts to be continued to be issued assuming that said legislation was acceptable to Parks legislative staff? This would allow us to jointly pursue an option, or options (such as a Master Concession Contract) which would satisfy current Resources Code.

Seventh, will Parks support our drawing for 2019 use? If so, do you have a preference as to whether you or we actually perform that draw? We are fine with doing it ourselves and submitting the results to you.

Eighth, what can we offer Parks to help both Parks and us to seek a resolution which meets both your and our interests and responsibilities?

In closing we would like to share with you that in rural towns such as Foresthill, Lotus, and Coloma commercial river outfitting is the engine that drives the economic health of those communities. Rivers provide a wealth of positive impacts, not the least of which is spiritual in nature. We look forward to working with your department as partners in continuing to offer a high quality and valuable service to the citizens of our state.

Thank you for your time.

2. Meredith Zanardi, Peak Adventures, Outdoor Adventures Manager

Mr. Zucker,

Thank you for facilitating the public meeting today. I appreciated the presentation you started with to allow for more of us to understand the process that State Parks will be going through to implement new plans on the 3 forks of the American River.

I made a comment about clarifying the definitions of institutional and non-profit and wanted to provide some additional context to consider in developing those definitions. Please add this to the public comments.

At many different land agencies Institutional has been defined as only those for which “participants/students” are receiving academic credit. This typically refers to university academic degree based programming where students pay the university. I have no opinion on this definition and feel that there is still a population that falls into it, though I think that population is smaller any agency perceives.

Non-profit has been defined by the tax code.

I want to bring forward the proposal to formally create a new definition and permit allocation option for programs that fall somewhere in between institutional and non-profit, or some that fall into both categories on occasion. This should not only be consider within the American River discussion, but throughout all State Parks system. I have talked with representatives from several State Parks districts to no avail. I’m hoping that with your position being state wide you can give direction as to how College/University outdoor recreation programs not providing academic credit for all users may address the need for a permitting system that matches our use patterns and population.

Some of the major challenges that currently exist are:

1. College programs are expected to fill out a special event permit for EACH trip to each park and each of these permits has an independent cost. That cost may be perceived as minimal (\$25+), but it can be very impactful as we look for ways to minimize costs to our students. I was charged this fee for operating a trip that was free for our users and lead to a greater loss than we already absorb. The special event permit currently being used on the S. Fork seems to be unique across the state in allowing multiple days to be considered in one permit application.
2. Districts have independent decision making when it comes to permits. This seems beneficial in the S. Fork discussion, but creates a cumbersome complex process that is more likely to see college/university programs avoiding state parks all together if compliance becomes more strictly enforced.

I see two distinct benefits for State Parks in addressing this issue.

1. Bring more programming into compliance. This ensures the proper insurance documentation and risk management assessments are provided. It also creates a better assessment for use patterns by this age demographic.
2. Expand the partnership between State Parks and outdoor recreation programs. These programs are not only a unique means to bring users to the parks, but also a strong recruiting/hiring tool for State Parks

My proposal:

- A state wide permit option that allows for university outdoor recreation programs, or programs that operate similarly and may also meet specified non-profit specifications, to allow for approved access to all state parks through one annual permit process
- As part of this process applicants can be expected to provide operational plans to denote in what parks (and potentially on what days) they intend to operate during a given year. This would allow State Parks to more formally track which parks are being more heavily used by these populations.
- A fee structure that supports State Parks administrative time without creating a burden on the programs operating costs.

Thank you for your support in either considering this information or delivering it to those who may assess its viability.

Meredith Zanardi | **Outdoor Adventures Manager**

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