



Natural and Cultural Resources Committee

Narrative Initiative Description and Status Report

Problem Statement

California State Parks has a mission that emphasizes the protection of its world class natural and cultural resources. This fundamental purpose of State Parks is highlighted in one of the Transformation Team's four strategic goals (Goal 4): to "Protect and Enhance Natural and Cultural Resources."

Increasingly, the Department is challenged to fulfill this aspect of its mission. Resources across the State Park System are degraded, making them vulnerable to stressors such as wildfire, drought, and coastal flooding, all of which will be exacerbated by climate change. As the state's largest landowner, the department's systems, practices, and staffing levels are stretched beyond their ability to meet stewardship requirements. Absent a significant re-investment in natural and cultural resources management, the Department will fall short of its charge protecting California's most valued natural and cultural resources for future generations.

Initiative Description and Approach

This initiative seeks to address the overarching need to protect the system's extraordinary natural and cultural resources by developing a set of deliverables that catapult stewardship in state parks to a level worthy of the outstanding and significant resources of the system. Those deliverables include recommendations for new or updated systems or best practices, the development of projects that exemplify state-of-the-art stewardship, and a set of vision statements that can guide on-going efforts and underpin future policies.

The Committee convened a high-level advisory workgroup made up of statewide leaders with expertise across key disciplines pertinent to State Parks. These leaders provided feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of State Parks' current approaches and provided initial recommendations for areas of further development of best practices and pilot projects. Currently, staff and consultants are investigating systems and practices used by other agencies and organizations in order to assess their applicability for State Parks.



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Challenges and Opportunities

Broadening the view: The original scope directed State Parks to work with stakeholders in identifying best practices for resource stewardship. Upon discussions with our stakeholders, however, the team broadened the initiative to include the identification and development of projects that both reflect and catalyze new approaches to resource protection. This development is aligned with the direction of the broader Transformation Team effort.

Developing the vision: The Committee, through its initial research and stakeholder engagement, has recognized that a set of vision statements should be developed to guide natural and cultural resources work. This effort will help clarify how State Parks can best carry out its resource protection mission in an era of rapid global change.

Engaging a broader cross-section: The Committee recognizes the need engage a cross-section of department staff in the conversation about our shared responsibility for resource stewardship; we are looking to this session as an opportunity to continue that effort.

Next Steps and Deliverables

As research on the initial systems and practices is developed, the Committee will continue to identify best practices and potential projects for further scoping and development. A first round of draft practices for consideration will be available soon.

In January, the advisory workgroup will be re-convened to provide feedback on the overall direction and comments on the evolving products. That meeting is anticipated to be held in a workshop fashion, which will allow these leaders in their fields to provide input to evolving vision statements as well as to craft initial recommendations based on the work to date.

Deliverables are already being prepared on a rolling basis. As such, they can achieve another goal of the Committee: those deliverables can be incorporated into other Transformation Team initiatives (such as those of the Partnerships, Relevancy, Operations, and Modernization Committees). Further, consistent with the recognition of the overall Transformation Team, one of our key goals is that each of the outcomes of the Transformation Team should be informed by, infused with, and guided by the need to protect natural and cultural resources.