

California's Recreation Policy

The five priority areas of focus within the Recreation Policy were developed as a response to the issues identified in the 2002 CORP. California's 2005 Recreation Policy outlines the state's strategies, priorities and actions for addressing the outdoor recreation issues of statewide significance. The Recreation Policy was then introduced during the development and public outreach of the CORP as a guide for updating the state's outdoor recreation Issues and Actions. Priorities identified during the Recreation Policy's development and public outreach process were integrated into the following chapter on Issues and Actions.

The Recreation Policy was proposed as a future element of the California Outdoor Recreation Planning Program in the 2002 CORP. The proposed Policy element was considered consistent with the 2002 CORP Issue: The Status of Parks and Recreation. The associated Action item called for stakeholders to: "Commission research to document the economic, social, heritage, cultural, recreational, health, public safety, and physiological benefits of parks and recreation programs and services in California." The current Recreation Policy update was funded through an amended 2003 LWCF planning grant and the Policy was completed in 2005.

Policy Background and Goals

Since the first policy was created in 1962, the California Recreation Policy has continuously reaffirmed the varied and increasingly important roles that park and recreation lands, facilities and programs play in bringing value to lives of Californians and their communities. Recreational opportunities provide Californians the freedom to develop their innate capabilities, intelligently use their energies, and enrich their health and well-being. Research consistently points toward recreation as essential to the physical and emotional well-being of individuals and society. It is therefore important that all Californians be provided with adequate opportunities by which they can pursue their recreational interests.

In recognition of this, the State Legislature has delegated responsibility for preparing California's Recreation Policy to the State Park and Recreation Commission. Public Resources Code (Section 540) and the Commission's Statements of Policy direct that: "The Commission shall formulate, in cooperation with other state agencies, interested organizations and citizens, and shall recommend to the Director (of the Department of Parks and Recreation) for adoption by him/her, a comprehensive recreational policy for the State of California."

This updated and comprehensive 2005 policy is directed at recreation providers at all service levels: federal, state, and local agencies and special districts; private suppliers; and quasi-public or nonprofit organizations. It is intended that all suppliers of park facilities and recreation opportunities will be guided by

California's Recreation Policy as they work to provide the high quality recreation experiences Californians have come to expect and which they deserve.

Policy Development and Public Outreach

The process used by the Commission in developing the 2005 California Recreation Policy has been open and inclusive. A twenty-seven member Policy Oversight Committee, involving representatives from public, private and non-profit groups, provided initial direction and later review to the effort. Early drafts of the policy were shared at a number of meetings and venues; written comments were solicited; the policy was posted on the Department's website; and was a topic on the Commission's April 2005 meeting agenda. Along the way, comments were received from well over 100 organizations and individuals.

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This 2005 California Recreation Policy is intended to be broad in scope and considers the full range of recreation activities – active, passive, indoors and out-of-doors. This timely policy considers the means by which recreational opportunities are provided – the lands, waters, facilities, programs and support functions – and it recognizes the considerable health, personal, social, economic and environmental benefits served through the many important dimensions of recreation.

To simplify and make the process more meaningful, the policy has been divided into five general areas:

- 1. Adequacy of recreation opportunities**
- 2. Leadership in recreation management**
- 3. Recreation's role in a healthier California**
- 4. Preservation of natural and cultural resources**
- 5. Accessible recreational experiences**

1. Adequacy of recreation opportunities

The supply of parklands, water, open space, recreation facilities and services must be adequate to meet future and current demands, particularly in the state's most populated areas.

It is State policy that:

An ample supply of park and recreation areas, along with their associated open space and natural areas, facilities, beaches and waterways, trails and programs should exist throughout California so all people can safely engage in near-home activities as well as opportunities to visit distant locations for extended leisure time or vacation pursuits.

Particular attention should be given to providing access to parklands and natural and developed recreation areas in and near the urban areas where most Californians live. In heavily populated areas, careful attention should be given to the acquisition and protection of natural and cultural resource lands, waters and open space. It is also important to recognize the need for critical recreational facilities in rapidly growing rural areas.

Public service providers closest to the recreation resources, and particularly to the sources of recreation demand, shall have the primary responsibility for providing comprehensive recreation opportunities in urban, suburban and rural areas of these cities, counties and special districts. It will be the responsibility of state agencies to take the lead where resources or recreation demands are of regional or far-reaching significance.

Parklands and trails should be promoted for the broad-scale economic and non-economic benefits they provide, whether through opportunities for physical activity, increased jobs, attracting tourists, supporting local communities, drawing in new businesses to park-friendly communities, providing vital concession operations or increasing property values.

2. Leadership in recreation management

Leadership, cooperation and partnership must be demonstrated at all levels to ensure that quality recreation resources, opportunities, programs and services are provided.

It is State policy that:

The State of California, through its Department of Parks and Recreation, should encourage and actively stimulate and coordinate active participation of federal, state, and local agencies, as well as the private and nonprofit sectors, in providing park and recreation lands, waters, facilities and programs.

Local public and private decision makers have an important leadership role in ensuring that a full range of stimulating, enjoyable and safe recreation experiences are available to their constituents, regardless of their skills, abilities or income levels. The State, by means of grants and

technical assistance, shall creatively aid local service providers in the realization of this vision and the vital delivery of these services.

Federal, state and local decision makers and program administrators should weigh the quality of life outcomes associated with park and recreation services in equal measure with other critical community services when considering the allocation of funding and staffing resources.

California's public and private schools, colleges and universities should support their undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate programs for training professionals in park and recreation management. In addition, they should support efforts related to conducting research (e.g., visitor's surveys, facility inventories and activity studies) on park and recreation related subjects and encourage beneficial internship programs at public agencies and non-profit organizations with the understanding that these worthwhile programs provide the future leadership for the park and recreation movement.

Providers in the private, quasi-public and nonprofit sectors are essential partners in the provision of recreation services. They should be encouraged to develop and operate a wide range of recreation resources, and to provide a considerable range of recreation opportunities on both private and public lands where appropriate.

Californians should have the opportunity to, and are encouraged to, actively participate as volunteers in support of recreation facilities and programs.

3. Recreation's role in a healthier California

Meaningful recreation activities, facilities, programs and increased opportunities for physical activity are vital to improving the health and well-being of Californians.

It is State policy that:

Park and recreation land, facilities and programs should be recognized as a positive force for individuals, families, communities and society, fostering extensive community pride, increasing productivity, significantly reducing crime and healthcare costs, and playing a vital role in preventing significant health ailments through physical activity.

Recreation programs should be available for all Californians, particularly for children and youth, to encourage inventive play and support lifelong physical activity and emotional well-being.

Park and recreation professionals should also promote and support increased physical activity among Californians, which is critical to combating the obesity epidemic and preventing serious, chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes. Park and recreation professionals should also actively take forward the unified and clear message that abundant parks, sports activities and recreation programs provide youth the opportunity to be involved in positive, supervised activities, and that recreation services play a critical role in reducing truancy, teen pregnancy, gang involvement and juvenile delinquency while building self-esteem and improving school performance.

Recreation providers should evaluate the availability and adequacy of facilities and programs to serve California's growing number of seniors associated with an aging population and make necessary adjustments to serve this increasingly important population. Senior programs should actively promote healthy lifestyles, physical activity, continued learning, and community engagement, including intergenerational activities.

Park and recreation providers at all levels should seek opportunities to collaborate with other critical social service programs in such fields as education, health care, housing, juvenile justice and social welfare.

Park and recreation professionals should understand and be able to convey the importance of providing quality passive recreation opportunities that assist the user in enjoying that quiet and solitude of a passive experience.

4. Preservation of natural and cultural resources

Educating Californians about their state's invaluable resources is a critical part of ensuring these resources continue to be available for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

It is State policy that:

A comprehensive environmental ethic should be fostered among all Californians, particularly its children and youth, to encourage wise use of the state's finite natural and cultural resources.

Californians should be made aware of California's unique and important environmental, ecological, scenic, historical and educational resources and opportunities contained within parks, recreation areas, open space and resource lands.

Inspiring educational materials should be available that have consistent core messages designed to conserve, protect and respect resource values and raise individual awareness to potential concerns.

Attention should be given to the conservation of critical habitat for special status plant species and wildlife, and the restoration of important natural areas such as wildlife corridors and wetlands. The preservation of and education about cultural and historic resources such as archaeological sites, historic trails or notable buildings should receive similar noteworthy attention.

To ensure resource lands, waterways and habitat will continue to be available for future generations, consideration should be given to protecting working farms and ranch lands with important natural and cultural resources through voluntary land protection agreements.

Recreation areas should be planned and carefully managed to provide optimum recreation opportunities without damaging significant natural or cultural resources. Management actions should strive to correct problems that have the potential to damage sensitive areas and degrade resources.

5. Accessibility to all Californians

All citizens have the right to enjoy California's park and recreation legacy.

It is State Policy that:

Physical barriers and administrative obstacles should be eliminated so California's park and recreation lands, waters, facilities, activities and programs are accessible to all who want to enjoy them.

Through careful planning and farsighted parkland acquisition in California's urban areas, Californians should have safe access to a park or other recreation area within walking distance of where they live.

Low income communities and communities embodying California's great diversity should be provided the same access to healthful outdoor settings, well-maintained facilities, and professionally competent programs as are enjoyed by all other Californians.

Employees of park and recreation service providers at all levels should reflect the diversity of California's people in order to better understand the needs and preferences of California's changing population.

Policy Implementation

Ongoing efforts within California State Parks to implement the Recreation Policy include expanding the State Park System, particularly in the State's most populated areas, **to help address the adequacy of recreation opportunities**. Los Angeles State Park State Recreation Area and Rio de Los Angeles State Historic Park (SHP) were both named and classified in 2005 and Rio de Los Angeles SHP was opened to the public opened in 2006. General plans for Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park, Malibu Creek State Park, Los Angeles SHP and Rio de Los Angeles SHP have all been completed since the Recreation Policy was drafted.

The Office of Grants and Local Services continues to provide **leadership in recreation management** through financial and technical assistance - to local units of government, including cities, counties, and districts that are authorized to acquire, develop, operate and maintain park and recreation areas - through matching grants for acquisition or development of lands and facilities that provide or support public outdoor recreation.

The independent non-profit California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism **continues its leadership efforts** to foster public and private efforts to provide quality sustainable outdoor recreation in California. The Roundtable's membership includes representatives from the outdoor recreation industries, user groups, environmental organizations, academia, and recreation providers, with a goal to improve marketing and communication and increase funding and public support.

To help **increase recreation's role in a healthier California** and due to recent concerns about youth detachment from outdoor activities, lack of physical exercise and increased health risks, the Roundtable also adopted the California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, which recommends a fundamental list of experiences that every child in California would benefit from experiencing before entering high school. Numerous studies document that children who do these things are healthier, do better in school, have better social skills and self-image, and lead more fulfilled lives.

As part of ongoing efforts to **promote preservation of natural and cultural resources**, California State Parks has received a national preservation award for preserving Gold Rush history in Columbia State Historic Park. State Parks was also awarded \$2.3 million in the "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002" grants to preserve history and culture. In late 2005 State Parks was nearing completion of a five-year, \$9 million natural ecosystem restoration program, funded through the "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002", and including over 140 separate ecosystem restoration projects. State Parks also joined communities and organizations throughout

California in 2007 to participate in the 23rd Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day

State Parks has also continued its **efforts to provide parks access to all Californians** through its FamCamp, Outdoor Youth Connection and Beach Play Day programs. FamCamp was founded in 1995 by the California State Parks Foundation with California State Parks to provide low-income families with greater access to California's state parks, build family bonds and break down social and financial barriers for underprivileged families through a guided weekend group camping trip for approximately 1,600 children and family members each year. The 2007 11th annual Beach Play Day also brought over 700 inner-city youth to Huntington State Beach to learn about outdoor physical fitness, building self-esteem and healthy living options.