# California State Parks'
# *Central Valley Vision*

## *Summary Report*

# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**November 29, 2006**

**California State Parks'** Central Valley Vision
Summary Report
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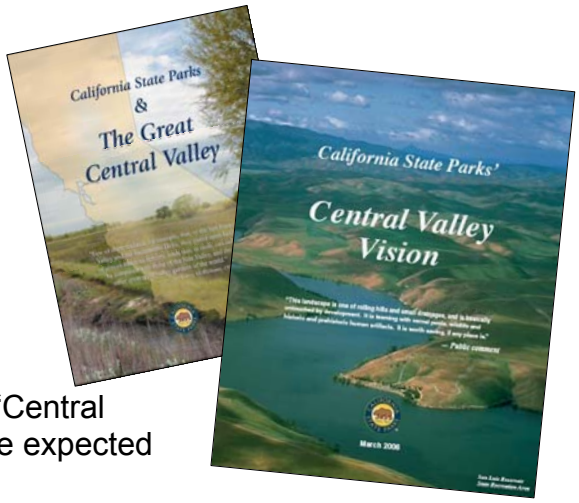
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY




The Central Valley Vision project began in early 2003 when the Department perceived a serious lack of available recreational opportunities in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. The Department set out to gather data to better understand the magnitude of the problem and to make recommendations for actions to be taken that would serve to anticipate the needs of valley (AKA "Central Valley") residents, whose members and diversity are expected to substantially change over the next 35 years.

During the fall of 2005, State Parks concluded a year-long concerted effort to inform the public and collect comments and suggestions on its Central Valley Vision project. Nearly two dozen public meetings occurred and they ranged from small focus groups to well attended public outreach meetings. Largely these meetings resulted in general concurrence that State Parks is moving in the right direction both in its acquisition and development policy decisions and in its assessment of park facilities, programs, opportunities and services within the Central Valley. The intent of this internal project summary is to discuss findings and provide recommendations for next step actions.

The assessment concluded that there are significant resource protection and recreational opportunities and programs in the Central Valley through which State Parks can better serve the needs of Valley residents and visitors. Detailed recommendations can be found later in this report. This report recommends State Parks undertakes the following actions:

1. Systematically assess and, if found appropriate, expand and improve park facilities and recreation programs at Central Valley State Park System units to accommodate the varied needs and interests of visitors and an increasingly changing Valley population.

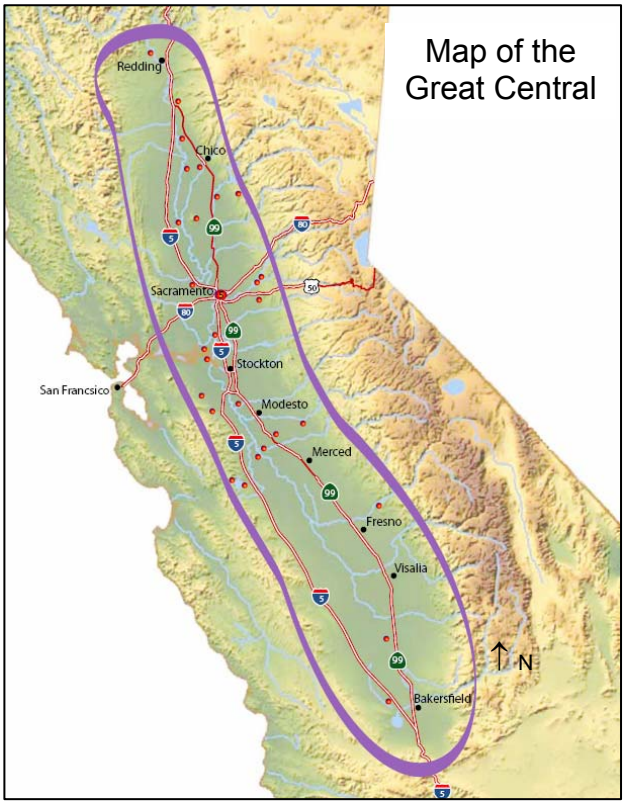

Governor's Mansion SHP

2. Significantly expand recreational and interpretive opportunities, programs, and the preservation of resources, particularly those along river corridors.

3. Continue to provide quality recreation programs and interpretive activities and consider expanding these services depending on staffing availability at Central Valley park units.

4. Strengthen partnerships with non-profits, concession operators, and other public agencies to expand active and passive-use, park and recreation facilities, programs and services.

## INTRODUCTION



Map of the Great Central

State Parks began collecting information starting in 2003 on the perceived gap of park and recreation services and opportunities in the Central Valley. It was believed that State Parks would be better able to guide park acquisition, development, and program activities over a 20-year planning horizon if staff had a better sense of Valley resident's interests, needs and desires.

An Oversight Committee was formed consisting of agency policy leaders, community activists, and State Park partners with an interest in planning and providing park and recreation facilities and services in the Central Valley. State Parks reviewed a variety of existing information and studies on the condition of Valley units, demographic projections and recreational trends, proposed development projects, park unit General Plans, current regional and local planning, funding and partnering efforts.

An internal assessment was conducted on the 35 State Park Central Valley units, potential acquisitions and development efforts, and grant funding (i.e., Land and Water Conservation Fund, Proposition 12 and Proposition 40) for local park and recreation service providers administered by the Office of Grants and Local Services.

Using this information, two of the Department's Divisions, Planning and Natural Resources, published three documents; two were eight-page informational brochures that included a variety of maps (April 2004 and March 2006) and the other was an internal project report (April 2005) that elaborated on the analysis and recommendations for future actions. Combined, these documents outlined the recommended priorities identified in the planning process and recommended that State Parks undertake


Sundial Bridge, Chuck Nelson, Courtesy of www.sacramentoriver.com

the following efforts to increase services at such time funding becomes available:

1. Recreation facilities: expand recreation facilities (camping, day-use, fishing, boating, trails, and large group facilities) particularly along river corridors, Valley reservoirs and at the Delta.

2. River Corridors: expand landholdings and State Parks' presence at existing units and acquire new parklands along river corridors, particularly where opportunities exist to link State Park units and other publicly owned lands.

3. Preserve and protect natural lands: acquire lands that preserve and protect threatened natural resources such as Blue Oak and Sycamore woodlands, and native grasslands.

4. Educate: better preserve and interpret the Valley's rich cultural history including agricultural history, Native American history and culture, and the history of water development, transportation, Highway 99, oil industry, immigrant workers and Dust Bowl refugees.

CA State Parks, Adventures in Learning

Tule Elk SR

San Luis Obispo Reservoir SRA

Photo courtesy of www.goplay.com

## CENTRAL VALLEY VISION PROJECT MILESTONES

| | |
|---|---|
| 2002-2003 | Director Coleman attends a series of workshops and meetings in the Great Central Valley and is impressed and alarmed with the dynamics of population, growth and political changes that are occurring. In addition, Director Coleman is concerned with how the Central Valley has largely been ignored by the passage of pass park bond acts and wants to establish a "roadmap" for future park bond funding as it relates to this important geographic area of California. |
| April 2003 | Director Coleman initiates the Central Valley Vision effort and assigns staff from the Planning and Natural Resources Divisions to lead a study to assess what State Parks should do to better serve the needs of Valley residents and visitors. |
| April 2004 | The first Central Valley Vision report is completed and an 8-page brochure is released. In a series of press conferences, Director Coleman announces that public workshops will be conducted to gain wider input on the Central Valley Vision effort. |
| Jan. 2006 | Planning staff presents an update of the Central Valley Vision effort to the Department's Planning, Policy and Programming Committee (PPPC). |
| May 2006 | The second 8-page Central Valley Vision brochure is released and a narrative summary of the findings is placed on the Department's web page. Sites for potential State Park acquisition and development are researched for their viability. |
| Spring - Fall | Public outreach meetings occur throughout the Valley. |
| July 2006 | In response to wide public interest in the Central Valley's river systems and the recreation and resource protection they provide to Valley residents, the Director assigns the Planning Division to initiate an assessment of Valley Rivers for potential State Park areas of interest. Stakeholder groups and individuals who attended the public workshops are sent a letter asking for assistance and feedback related to rivers and water based recreation opportunities. Research and site visits are conducted on seven Valley rivers and the upper-Sacramento River. Consultants are hired and field visits and literature research begins. Draft reports are prepared and distributed for consideration. |
| Aug. 2006 | Planning staff present an update of the Central Valley Vision effort to PPPC. |
| Nov. 2006 | Final Central Valley Vision internal report is completed and distributed. The final river study reports are provided to the Director and Executive staff for their consideration. |

## BACKGROUND


Photo courtesy of CA State Parks, Natural Resources Division

State Parks embarked on a long-range planning effort for the Central Valley to respond to phenomenal population growth and dramatic and far-reaching demographic changes. The 20-year Central Valley Vision effort was initiated in April 2003, a time when much information was being published about the tremendous development pressures in the Valley. A team consisting of staff from the Planning Division and Natural Resources Division prepared an internal report and developed a brochure describing the effects that explosive population changes will have on the 18 Central Valley counties. These counties (part or all) in alphabetical order are:

- Butte, Colusa, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Solano, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo and Yuba

The Central Valley State Park units from north to south are:

Shasta SHP
William B. Ide Adobe SHP
Woodson Bridge SRA
Bidwell-Sacramento River SP
Bidwell Mansion SHP
Lake Oroville SRA
Clay Pit SVRA
Sutter Buttes
Colusa-Sacramento River SRA
Woodland Opera House SHP
Folsom Lake SRA
Folsom Powerhouse SHP
State Capitol Museum
Sutter's Fort SHP
State Indian Museum SHP
Governor's Mansion SHP
Old Sacramento SHP
State Railroad Museum
Leland Stanford Mansion SHP
Prairie City SVRA
Stone Lakes
Delta Meadows River Park
Locke Boarding House
Brannan Island SRA
Franks Tract SRA
Bethany Reservoir SRA
Caswell Memorial SRA
Carnegie SVRA
Turlock Lake SRA
McConnell SRA
George J. Hatfield SRA
Great Valley Grasslands SP
Pacheco SP
San Luis Reservoir SRA
Millerton Lake SRA
Colonel Allensworth SHP
Tule Elk SR

Compared to other California regions, park and recreation service providers in the Central Valley received significantly less park bond funding and other financial support for the protection, development, and implementation of their programs, opportunities and related services. By collecting information on gaps in public demand for park and recreational services, and demand for specific services, State Parks would be better able to guide State Park acquisition and development activities over a long planning horizon of 20 years.

To get a better understanding of how the population growth is affecting policy decisions, staff interviewed local policy leaders; met with community and non-profit group members; reviewed a wide variety of research materials, documents, and surveys; analyzed demographic and recreational trends; and reviewed proposed State Park acquisition and development projects, General Plans and regional planning efforts. Staff reviewed natural, cultural and recreational resources at both existing park units and those that have been proposed for acquisition consideration.


Caswell Memorial SRA

These efforts resulted in an initial brochure and internal report, both completed in April 2004, which highlighted the Department's Central Valley Vision. Following the release of these reports, Director Coleman issued a series of news releases and made public appearances announcing State Park's vision and committing the Department to an additional round of meetings to gather public comments on the vision and to solicit suggestions for improvements to it. These meetings occurred throughout the Valley in 2005.

In May 2006, Director Coleman held three press conferences to announce the newest brochure for the Central Valley Vision. The purpose of the new brochure was to summarize comments heard at the public meetings and identify steps to increase and improve services at Central Valley park units. A number of documents are included in the Appendix of this report, including the two brochures, a compendium of public comments, maps, suggested acquisition areas of interest, and copies of news articles regarding press conferences that occurred throughout the planning process.

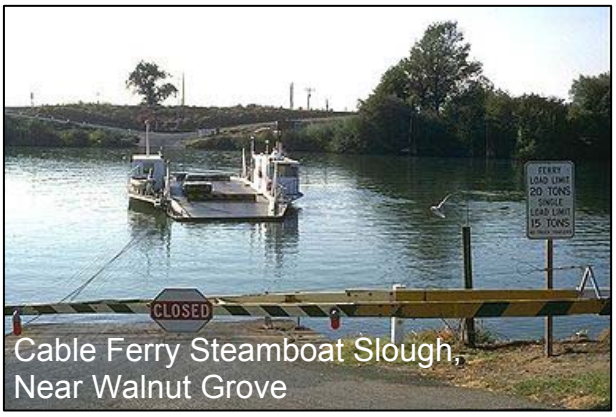

West side of the San Joaquin Valley

A reoccurring and consistent message sounded throughout this research process: no longer is the Central Valley simply the agricultural hub of California. Instead, this significantly diverse region is home to several of the fastest growing counties and communities in California (and the window of opportunity to act before it's too late is quickly coming to a close). An example of this strong sense of urgency can be seen in communities like Tracy and Yuba City. These growing cities were once thought to be outside of the mainstream for Bay Area commuters but are now considered to be within reasonable travel distances, something virtually unheard of 20 years ago.

Housing affordability and quality of life decisions such as the quality of schools and shopping availability are creating enormous demands for large scale housing and retail tracts in Central Valley communities like Tracy, Stockton, Marysville and Sacramento. Entire new communities, such as the 40,000 resident master planned community of Mountain House near Tracy are considered by planners and local officials to be Bay Area bedroom communities. To further exacerbate the situation, the construction of the new UC Merced campus and the tremendous growth occurring in once small agricultural cities and towns such as Atwater, Woodland, Kerman, Chowchilla and Hanford are taxing the ability for providers to keep pace with the demand for services – and valley residents, policy leaders and community activists are taking notice.

The pace of growth can be summed up in the following quote. On June 28, 2006, an article in the Sacramento Bee, "Valley Worried About Growth", staff writer Adam Ashton wrote: *"Increasing numbers of valley residents say they are concerned about growth and are willing to limit development to preserve agriculture and environmentally sensitive areas, according to a new survey from the Public Policy Institute of California."*


Delevan National Wildlife Refuge, Near Maxwell



Cable Ferry Steamboat Slough, Near Walnut Grove


Cornfield near Colusa

## DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

According to the Department of Finance, 6.3 million people currently call the Central Valley home. By 2040, the population is projected to reach nearly 12 million. New arrivals are attracted to the Valley for the relatively affordable cost-of-living and for quality-of-life factors such as affordable housing, jobs, recreation opportunities and schools. Urban growth within the Valley is projected to be an astounding 20 – 25% higher than in California coastal areas during this same time frame.


McConnell SRA

With the sheer volume of additional residents come startling shifts in demographics as demonstrated in Table 1. For example, the Hispanic population is projected to more than double by 2020 and the population of Asian and Pacific Islander populations will nearly triple. As park and recreation service providers we are taking notice of these shifts and the profound impact they will have on our profession.

Table 1 – Population Projections for Central Valley Counties by Ethnicity

| | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 | 2030 | 2040 | 2050 . |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 3,011,951 | 2,905,872 | 2,934,506 | 2,959,698 | 2,952,686 | 2,961,450 |
| Hispanic | 1,728,914 | 2,647,464 | 3,631,865 | 4,660,298 | 5,736,157 | 6,892,998 |
| Asian/PI | 456,638 | 655,259 | 863,418 | 1,060,231 | 1,205,261 | 1,333,484 |
| Black | 347,535 | 513,334 | 681,819 | 841,942 | 981,396 | 1,113,300 |
| Multirace | 183,309 | 314,688 | 454,675 | 589,642 | 699,028 | 795,825 |
| **Total Populations** | **5,728,347** | **7,036,617** | **8,566,283** | **10,111,811** | **11,574,528** | **13,097,057** |

Source: State of California, Department of Finance

Ethnicity changes are not the only significant demographic indicator. Many baby boomers have postponed parenthood until they are older resulting in a new baby boom that is occurring today. Also, older Californians are far more active in their recreational pursuits than in previous generations, and are very involved in their communities through activism and volunteerism.

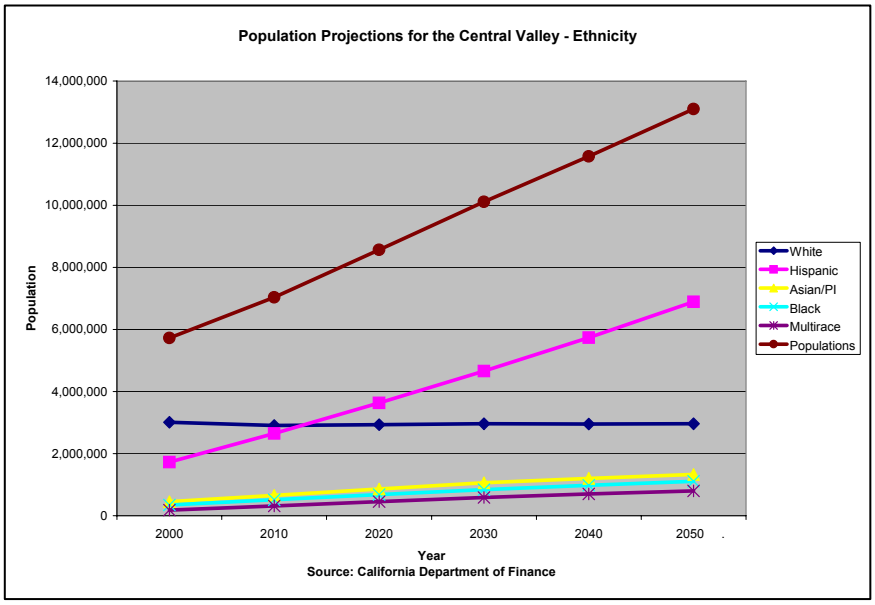

Photo courtesy of Geoff Fricker
www.Sacramentoriver.com

Policy leaders are also taking notice. On March 3, 2006, Dan Walters of the Sacramento Bee wrote: *"The baby boom is producing more than a baby a minute…Population growth increases demand for housing, **parks**, water, transportation, schools and other forms of public infrastructure."*

According to the Department of Finance, these same baby boomers are living longer and staying active later in life. California's senior population – those 60-65 and older, will increase by 112% between 1990 and 2020. The oldest age group represented by those 85 and older, will increase at an even faster rate. From 2030 to 2040, baby boomers will reach the age of 85 and the influence of these elders will be the strongest. This generation will have a dramatic impact on how park and recreation service providers are able to provide needed services, for example many of the state park units report much higher visitation on weekends, however, as baby boomers age and as statistics indicate that they will be healthier and more active, the Department knows that facilities and programs will increasingly be of demand during the week. Additional population information can be found in the Appendix.


George J. Hatfield SRA

In addition to growing older, Californians are also growing younger –fueled not only by births, but primarily through immigration. With nearly five million (almost 40%) of California's households having children under 18, it is vital to recognize the importance of outdoor recreation opportunities for youth living in the Central Valley.




Recreation is fundamental for children's physical, mental, social and emotional well-being.

Younger Californians are more ethnically and culturally diverse, more technologically savvy, and demand more and different forms of services, programs and opportunities that are frequently adventure-based such as rock climbing, wind surfing and off-road motorcycle riding. The 2002 Public Opinions and Attitudes Survey indicate to park and recreation professionals that regrettably, young Californians appear to have less interest in traditional forms of outdoor recreation activities, and for example, want to be entertained through the use of computer and video games, music and the use of high tech equipment such as snow boards, skate boards and bikes. It will be a challenge for the Department to draw them away from their gadgets such as iPods, lap tops, computer games and cell phones, and entice them to enjoy the many outdoor recreation pursuits the Department offers such as camping, hiking and fishing.

Participating in outdoor recreation and educational activities such as FamCamp, Junior Lifeguards and ParkPALS help to develop our youth, improve their learning ability, and assist in deterring negative behaviors. FamCamp is designed to encourage community groups and youth who may have minimal camping experience and lack outdoor equipment and is very popular at a variety of Central Valley State Park units including Lake Oroville SRA, Folsom Lake SRA, San Luis Reservoir SRA, and Millerton Lake SRA.

In addition to not being interested in many of the traditional forms of outdoor recreation, new immigrants to the United States and to California (primarily from Mexico, Central America and southeast Asia) do not have the familiarity or experience with the facilities, services, and programs State Parks provides. Nor have they come from a public service or political environment that provides them the public involvement processes California uses. Immigrants often do not come from a background where governmental service providers consistently ask them about their needs and interests.


Geocaching, courtesy of casanovaadventures.com

Growth has tremendous implications to State Parks, particularly to Central Valley units where so much growth is occurring – and creates a strong sense of urgency to acquire lands and protect resources before it's too late. The predicted growth may also create an increase in the volume of recreation activities that are declining, such as horseshoes. These activities will grow in use because the sheer number of people projected will cause participation to rise. The combined pressure from both traditional forms of recreation use (e.g., trails, water-based activities and camping) and newer activities (e.g., geocaching, mountain biking, snow boarding and bouldering) is creating conflict for State Park managers for the same park space and facilities. Perhaps most importantly, given the changing age and ethnic structure of the Valley, State Parks has to be concerned about maintaining its relevance to a broad number of ethnicities, ages and culturally diverse populations. In addition, advances in the selection of recreation equipment and supplies will become increasingly more relevant to park visitors, for instance recreation vehicles, Wi-Fi, generators, boating, biking and off-road vehicles – and State Park visitors will want to have facilities and programs to accommodate these interests.

With the senior population increasing, more retirees are expected to be healthier and more affluent and active in their communities. "*All of this speaks to an improved quality of life.*" (Richard Hordes, Director of the National Institute of Aging, Sacramento Bee, March 10, 2006.) In addition, there will be a substantially different class of people than in previous generations. Seniors will be working less and are projected to be healthier and more affluent than previous generations. In 1959, 35% of people over 65 lived in poverty. By 2003, that figure dropped to 10%. The proportion of older Americans with a high school diploma rose to 71.5% in 2003 from 17% in 1950.

## ANALYSIS


Prairie City, Photo courtesy of CA State Parks, OHMVR Division

The 35 State Park units located throughout the Central Valley comprise about 7% of the total State Park System acres statewide. Of these, one-third of the Central Valley units are concentrated in the Sacramento region. Total annual visitation for 2003 through 2005 (the three year period of the Central Valley Vision effort) exceeded 16,000,000 visitors or roughly 6.7% of the total State Park system attendance of 241,218,000 visitors. According to a voluntary visitor entrance survey, roughly half of all Central Valley park visitors live in the Central Valley, with about 35-40% coming from elsewhere within California and 10-12% visiting from outside California. The majorities of visitors are predominantly white, middle-aged and fall into the middle income bracket. It should be noted that this survey relied on visitors voluntarily completing and turning in the survey forms and cannot be considered statistically accurate. People with lower incomes, the young and elderly, as well as people of color may be undercounted in these surveys.


Modesto Public Meeting, Great Valley Center, September 20, 2005

The range of Central Valley Park classifications is impressive; however, the total park acreage of these units is disappointing. One-third of State Park units with boating use and one-fourth of the State Park System's off-highway motor vehicle recreation parks are located in the Central Valley, yet the southern section of the San Joaquin Valley has relatively few State Park opportunities compared to the northern portion of the Central Valley.


Sacramento Marina Existing Berths

Roughly half of the park units in the Central Valley are focused on cultural heritage values and resources such as Shasta SHP, Col. Allensworth SHP, Folsom Powerhouse SHP, State Railroad Museum, State Indian Museum SHP and the recently refurbished Leland Stanford SHP and many of these are clustered in the Sacramento area. Central Valley units also have a wide variety of natural resources including Bidwell-Sacramento River SP, Delta Meadows River Park, Caswell Memorial SRA, Great Valley Grasslands SP and the newly acquired lands at Sutter Buttes.

Looking for a moment from the perspective of the local park and recreation service provider, the Central Valley unfortunately has a disproportionate number of park units and total park acreage compared to the rest of the State Park System and California as a whole. Unfortunately, the Central Valley also received a disproportionate amount of recent park bond funding. For example, of the $1 billion in statewide population-based funding from

Propositions 12 and 40, public entities in the Central Valley were allocated $161 million or 16% of the total. Sacramento and Fresno accounted for 38% of the population-based funds. Of the competitive grant programs, Central Valley counties received $80 million in competitive funds, representing 23% of the total $353 million statewide. Additional information about local agency grant funding can be found in the Appendix.

## FINDINGS FROM PUBLIC OUTREACH MEETINGS

Staff conducted meetings up and down the Valley over the pasts three years. Feedback and suggestions by Valley residents were collected and posted on the State Parks' web site, www.parks.ca.gov. Public workshops and meeting locations included: Woodland, Madera, Fresno, Red Bluff, Modesto, Sacramento, Chico, Stockton, Isleton, Atwater and Bakersfield.


Lake Oroville SRA

At the public meetings, staff asked several questions for public input about the direction that the Central Valley Vision effort should take: These questions included the following:

- What is important in the Central Valley that should be protected and interpreted as a unit of the State Park System before it is lost?
- Which natural, historical and cultural resources and features should be protected before they vanish?
- What special stories need to be told and where are the places that need to be protected in order to tell these stories?
- What recreational facilities of the kind found in State Parks should be planned, developed and where should they be located?

Director Ruth Coleman at the Redding press conference

The public was encouraged to provide suggestions and feedback on the Central Valley Vision effort, and a complete listing of their suggestions and comments can be found in the Appendix. A summary is provided in the seven general themes below. Please note that some items have overlap and may occur in more than one themed area.

1. Strong interest for river access, including:
    a. fishing access areas and related amenities
    b. boat ramps and staging areas for motorized and non-motorized water recreation (e.g., personal watercraft, kayaks, rafts and fishing skiffs)

c. water trails and water front trails with interpretive signage and maps
d. swimming and sandy beach water play areas
e. day-use facilities adjacent to access areas, such as shaded group picnic facilities, comfort stations, parking lots and barbecue areas
f. nature study and interpretive wildlife viewing decks and areas

2. Requests for additional State Park lands, including:
   a. transfers of county, city and non-profit lands and facilities to State Parks for operation and maintenance
   b. river front properties, especially those that link with other public lands (i.e., trails) for habitat corridors and trails
   c. timely purchases before costs become prohibitively expensive and the loss to mega mansions and retail centers
   d. oak and sycamore woodland habitat and riparian preservation
   e. various sized and resource locations of specific interest rather than statewide interest
   f. open space, such as working farms developed through implementation of agricultural conservation easements and the use of the Williamson Act

3. Need for increased agency assistance (Organizations requested State Parks consider assuming responsibility of regional park facilities):
   a. extend interagency partnerships and cooperative efforts
   b. expand concession opportunities
   c. link State Park properties to other public agency holdings


Turlock Lake SRA campground

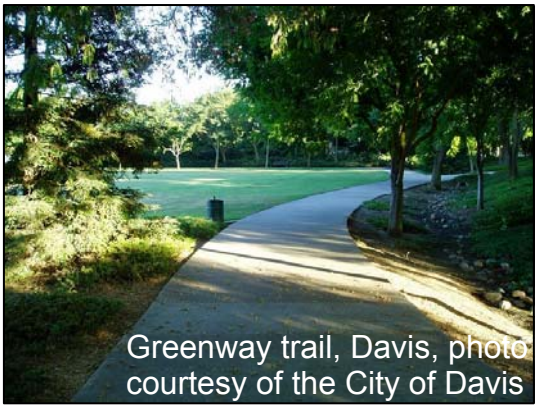
4. Requests for varied recreation opportunities including:
   a. passive use settings for nature study and photography
   b. visitor centers and museums
   c. multi-use trail facilities and staging areas
   d. open turf areas for kite flying, pick-up games, Frisbee and pet walking
   e. geocaching
   f. off-highway vehicle areas that include both camping and day-use amenities
   g. recreation programs and services
   h. boat-in camping sites

5. High interest in increasing and updating camping and day-use facilities:
   a. provide for large group facilities such as extended family units (covered picnic areas, barbecue areas, nearby parking and comfort stations)
   b. alternative camping facilities such as tent cabins, RV hook-ups, and yurts
   c. additional sitting areas (benches and picnic tables)

6. Requests for additional trails with an emphasis on:
    a. trails that have interpretive signs, kiosks, maps and/or brochures for educational purposes
    b. multi-use trails that can accommodate horses, bikes, and foot traffic
    c. areas and trails that can accommodate off-highway vehicles
    d. water trails for small boats, such as canoes, rafts and kayaks
    e. accessibility for all users regardless of physical ability


Trail biking, photo courtesy of IMBA www.imba.com/tcc/2003

7. Demand for increased education and interpretation of the Central Valley's interesting and varied resources and history, including:
    a. Native American history and culture
    b. stories about immigrants
    c. economic importance of agriculture, including farm labor and the related story about water resources and use
    d. impact of water development
    e. role of the Chinese in building levees and their participation in the Gold Rush
    f. waterways as transportation corridors, for example the Sacramento River from San Francisco via the Delta to Sacramento
    g. regionalized history and stories surrounding the Highway 99 corridor
    h. Dust Bowl migration story
    i. paleontological educational opportunities
    j. geology and the oil industry
    k. visitor centers, displays, signs, kiosks, maps, brochures, and programs in multiple languages
    l. recreation programs, activities and opportunities provided in multiple languages (e.g., Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese)


Greenway trail, Davis, photo courtesy of the City of Davis

## MORE ON URBAN GROWTH IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

Here's a sobering thought: *"Are you ready for the equivalent of 10 new Fresnos? That's how many new people are expected in the San Joaquin Valley by 2040, according to experts from the Great Valley Center,"* wrote "Brad Barker in the Modesto Bee, July 5, 2006.

As the pressure of growth continues to strain public agencies, those organizations charged with providing planning, utilities, and transportation struggle to provide public services. Main transportation corridors such as Highway 99, Interstate 5, and Highway 50 are being redesigned and altered to meet the crush of commuters, travelers and transportation carriers. Alarmed by the pace and direction of growth, non-profit land trust groups and recreation oriented groups are forming to address the decline of natural and cultural resources and are asking for additional public outdoor recreation opportunities. They are partnering with agencies like the State Office of Historic Preservation and the Department of Fish and Game for technical assistance and grant funding for the acquisition and operation of a variety of public lands and facilities.


State Indian Museum

Some progress has been made in the past three years understanding growth patterns and analyzing various acquisition and development options, yet there is much to be done. It must be acknowledged that this is a region that has traditionally viewed parklands and open space as a low priority compared to other regions of the state, and political support for parks and recreation has not been strong. As row crops and orchards increasingly make way for mass housing tracts, shopping malls and commercial centers, the dilemma can be summed up in the following quote from Stockton horse breeder and developer Fritz Grupe appearing in an article reprinted by the Great Valley Center, October 1998, Modesto Bee, *"If your farming return is $2,000 to $3,000 per acre, and a developer offers you $40,000 an acre, what are you going to do?"*.


Photo courtesy of CA State Parks, Natural Resources Division

Urban growth threatens farmland, the environment (water, open space and natural and cultural resources), and increases social and fiscal disparities. In the very near future, once small and mid-size communities such as Redding, Red Bluff, Stockton, Modesto, Tracy, Madera and Merced are going to become

major urban areas. With an increase in population comes an increased public demand for open space and access to cultural, natural, and recreational resources.

## MORE ABOUT STATE PARKS

In the Internal Report of April 2004, 22 geographic areas were identified as being of significant interest to State Parks to accommodate some of the future demand. The suggested sites ranged from access sites along the Sacramento River, areas along the Highway 99 corridor, to a new State Vehicular Recreation Area near Bakersfield. Several other specific areas clustered around water-based recreation facilities, such as, rivers and reservoirs. It was found that these geographic areas reflected State Parks acquisition priorities and is represented by the Department's Acquisition Guidelines, such as Urban Initiatives and Expanded Outdoor Recreation Opportunities (see below). Two additional sites were added after the release of the internal report (Orestimba Watershed and the Panoche Valley). One site listed in the original report, Dunnigan Hills, was further evaluated and determined to no longer have strong consideration. The Department's acquisition guidelines consist of eight strategies that, with minor adjustments could be modified to include properties within the Central Valley. The eight acquisition strategies are:

- Expanded Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
- Cultural Landscapes and Corridors
- Significant Cultural Resource Properties
- Sustainable Ecosystems
- Unique Natural Resource Areas
- Trail Connections and Corridors
- Urban Initiative Acquisitions
- In-holdings and Adjacent Properties

Looking for places to expand State Park presence, from a recreation perspective, given the linear nature of the Valley, publicly accessible parkways that offer multi-use trails and greenways adjacent to river corridors would be important, especially to the burgeoning populations in nearby communities to the east and west of the Central Valley. Properties that provide multiple recreation opportunities, such as those that are water based, camping and hiking trails are essential. Properties that connect to other publicly managed lands or which are in close proximity to existing park units are also important.

The Department reviewed suggestions for historic areas of interest, unique properties that provided cultural landscapes and corridors, and those that could "tell a story" about trade routes, migrant farm workers, and the importance of water to Central Valley agricultural


Franks Tract SRA

providers. From a natural resources perspective, it was confirmed by numerous public statements that the Central Valley has numerous opportunities, especially those that could tie into existing Valley units. Those properties that provide unique geomorphic features or have a rare or unique habitat type are of particular interest to State Parks.

State Parks maintains a list of acquisitions; the 2006-07 MYCOP list which has been screened for Central Valley applicability. The current Proposition 40 Acquisition Priority List was screened for Central Valley suggested properties and a revised list of acquisition areas of interest was subsequently developed and is provided in the Appendix.

## STATE PARK GENERAL PLANS: (CVV units)


Photo courtesy of the San Diego Sea to Sea Trail Foundation

State Park unit General Plans guide the uses and scope of development at a specific park unit and can take two years or longer to complete. General Plans are used to guide the protection of natural and cultural resources, provide for and manage recreational opportunities; and outline the future development of public facilities. This guidance is essential to the Department's managers and staff and is of value to those organizations and individuals who have a substantial interest in a particular state park unit and understanding how that unit fits in to the State Park System. The Central Valley units and the status of their General Plans are as follows (asterisk denotes that a General Plan does not exist):


Lake Natoma/Folsom Lake SRA

Bethany Reservoir SRA –1973
Bidwell Mansion SHP – 1983
Bidwell-Sacramento River SP – 2006
Brannan Island SRA – 1987
Carnegie SVRA –1981
Caswell Memorial SRA – 1969
Clay Pit SVRA*
Colonel Allensworth SHP – 1976
Colusa-Sacramento River SRA – 1957
Delta Meadows River Park*
Folsom Lake SRA – 1979 (update in process)
Folsom Powerhouse SHP – 1979 (update in process)
Franks Tract SRA – 1987
George J. Hatfield SRA*
Governor's Mansion – 1991
Great Valley Grasslands SP*
Lake Oroville – in process
Leland Stanford Mansion SHP – 1989
McConnell SRA*
Millerton Lake SRA – 1983 (update in process)
Old Sacramento SHP – 1970

Pacheco SP – 2006
Prairie City SVRA – 1991
San Luis Reservoir SRA – in process
Shasta SHP – 1992
State Capitol Museum*
State Railroad Museum*
Stone Lakes*
Sutter Buttes*
Sutter's Fort SHP/Indian Museum – 1990
Tule Elk SR – 1958
Turlock Lake SRA*
William B. Ide Adobe SHP – 1990
Woodland Opera House SHP – 1980
Woodson Bridge SRA*


Colonel Allensworth SHP


Rafting the Sacramento River
Courtesy of www.sacramentoriver.com


American Painted Lady Butterfly,
Photo courtesy of Las Pilitas Nursery

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS


Kayaking, photo courtesy of Quintessential tours

State Parks' Central Valley Vision is an ambitious strategy to identify long-range and near-term Department-wide actions to meet the public's needs through a renewed effort to build economic and volunteer partnerships, park developments, upgrade facilities and possibly acquire new lands for park facilities.

The Central Valley Vision assessment concluded that there are significant resources and recreational opportunities in the Central Valley through which State Parks can better serve the needs of residents and visitors. These needs can best be met through an aggressive program involving the potential redesign and development of recreation facilities at existing and new park units to better serve an increasingly diverse population of recreation enthusiasts; acquisition of key lands to both round out existing boundaries and provide landscape corridors for Central Valley state park units to enhance the state park system; and through the provision of additional educational and recreational programs and activities. The Next Steps section of the report suggests recommendations for future action. It is expected that additional actions and projects supportive of State Parks' Central Valley Vision will be undertaken as funding becomes available.


Stanislaus River, Caswell Memorial SRA

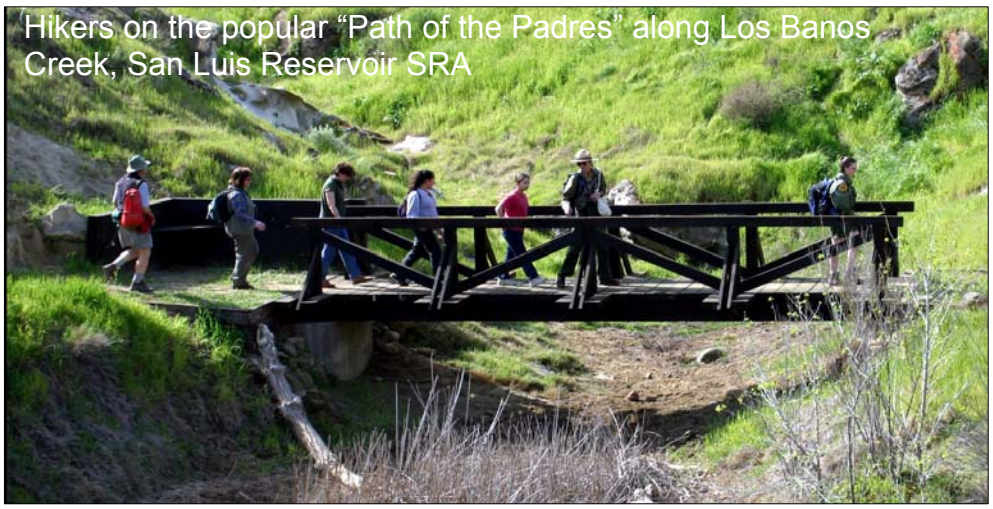
The incredible pace of growth, and the changes it will bring to the Central Valley, is the common denominator woven throughout this entire complex Central Valley Vision effort. Today, Central Valley leaders are facing far-reaching demographic, economic and social change brought on by this growth. More and more farms and grazing lands are being converted to shopping malls, roads and housing tracts. This is increasingly evident to anyone driving north along Highway 99 from Bakersfield to Stockton. Where there were once small fruit stands set in a rural, agricultural environment, today, will be found new developments as urban city limit lines expand farther and farther from urban downtown areas. The demand for open space lands, public recreation access areas and opportunities for a multitude of recreational and educational activities is exponentially increasing as the population grows and the Central Valley becomes little different than the rest of California. Unfortunately, public agencies have not been able to keep up with public demand for lands, services and facilities, updated infrastructure, and day-to-day operations and maintenance of existing sites and at the public workshops, it was often commented that it is hoped that

State Parks will consider taking over the operations and maintenance of local and regional park facilities to lessen the local agency's' operational burden.

Although there are no funds currently available for full-scale implementation of the Central Valley Vision, the Department's goal, through this planning effort is to prepare for such a time when funding and additional staff resources become available. The Vision has been a starting point for discussion about crafting language for future funding sources and it will continue to serve as a guide for future State Park programs, services, and acquisition and development programs and projects throughout the Valley.

Agricultural field, San Joaquin Valley


Fishing the Sacramento River


Hikers on the popular "Path of the Padres" along Los Banos Creek, San Luis Reservoir SRA

## NEXT STEPS IDENTIFIED IN THE 2006 CENTRAL VALLEY BROCHURE

The March 2006 Central Valley brochure identified six suggested efforts that would increase and improve recreational services to Central Valley residents and visitors. The specific projects are listed below, along with their current status;

1. *Identify and prioritize areas with greatest need for parks and best opportunities along river corridors and continue working with partners to develop boat access and visitor facilities in Central Valley state parks, including along the Sacramento River.*

   Status: The Planning Division is coordinating two first phase feasibility river studies; the San Joaquin Valley Rivers (Mokelumne, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced, San Joaquin, Kings and Kern) and another of the Sacramento River. Potential acquisition sites, development opportunities at existing state park units and potential recreation programming opportunities will be identified in the reports. See Appendix II for the rivers study scoping document.

2. *Provide technical assistance to local partners, including training in grant writing.*

   Status: The Statewide Trails Section along with the Division of Grants and Local Services provide on-going grant writing workshops to State Park staff, non-profits and local agency service providers. In addition, the Planning Division continues to make available the *Getting a Grip on Grants* (2003) and the *Directory of Grant Funding Sources* (2004) on the Department's web site and distribution through its partners such as the California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS), California State Park Rangers Association (CSPRA) and its 90 Cooperating Associations and other non-profit service providers. Technical assistance articles on subjects ranging from Mello-Roos funding, forming Benefit Assessment Districts, Volunteerism and the Effective use of Conservation Easements are being written and distributed to CPRS and other partners.

3. *Increase community involvement programs in the Central Valley in order to improve access to park and recreation programs.*

   Status: The Office of Community Involvement continues to offer FamCamp, ParkPALS and other important educational programs. The intent is to expand these programs to the extent possible with increased funding and staffing.

4. *Identify locations and funding to develop alternative camping facilities (e.g., cabins and tent cabins), multi-family campsites and picnic areas.*

   Status: The Planning Division, Concessions Division and Park Operations and identified districts are in the process of identifying additional camping opportunities including group sites and alternative camp sites for Central Valley State Park units. The Department's Strategic Initiatives have identified the critical need to expand facilities for traditional tent and alternative camping. Funding sources, including

future bond measures, for planning, development, and operations and maintenance are being assessed.

The updated category to expand recreation development in the MYCOP program has identified group and alternative camping, and group day-use facilities as top priorities. See Appendix III.

5. *Update and add natural and cultural resource educational signage.*

   Status: California Department of Transportation and the Great Valley Center (GVC) through their Greenstop Design Competition, have developed a self-sustainable greenstop – a rest area that is sustainable in terms of wastewater uses, recycling, and other operations to ensure a "zero footprint" on the environment at the Tipton rest area along Route 99 in Tulare County, San Joaquin Valley. The design addressed interpretive issues with input with State Parks. Interpretation and Education Division has been identified to partner with Caltrans and GVC to establish funding, design and installation of interpretive panels along Highway 99 and I-5. Division efforts cannot proceed until funding is secured.

6. *Expand and improve off-highway vehicle recreation facilities in underserved areas.*

   Status: The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division is tasked to identify a location in the Bakersfield area for a future State Vehicular Recreation Area. The draft Environmental Impact Report is underway. The Kern County Planning Commission recently voted in September 2006 to support the SVRA. A vote before the Kern County Board of Supervisors is scheduled for January 2007.

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM THE CENTRAL VALLEY VISION – FINAL REPORT

The Central Valley Vision Final Report recommends State Parks undertake four additional actions that would further enhance and increase recreational opportunities:

1. *Systematically assess active and passive recreation opportunities in the vicinity of major Central Valley communities and, if found appropriate, expand and improve park facilities at Central Valley units to accommodate varied needs and interests of an increasingly changing Valley population.*

   Status: State Parks will soon update its MYCOP to reflect current conditions and demands, and identify future objectives. For example, funds could be used to improve and expand camping facilities at Caswell Memorial SRA or for the expansion of river access and day-use facilities to the Sacramento River at Colusa-Sacramento River SRA. Appendix III provides an initial assessment of potential camping and picnicking developments at State Park units in the Central Valley.

2. *Significantly expand recreational opportunities, programs and services and preserve resources particularly along river corridors while strengthening partnerships with other public land owners such as the Department of Water Resources, Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Fish and Game.*
   Status: The first Central Valley Vision report (2004) identified four rivers of significant interest – the Stanislaus River, Tuolumne River, Merced River, and the San Joaquin River. Public comments received at workshops conducted since April 2004 recommended that State Parks add the Sacramento, Mokelumne, Kings, Kern, the lower San Joaquin Rivers, and the Kawea River. An assessment by the Planning Division is underway of these Central Valley Rivers for:

   - Water quality
   - Water flow
   - Public access
   - Recreation opportunities
   - Natural and cultural resources
   - Potential for trail linkages
   - Potential parcels of interest with proximity to urban centers
   - Potential partnership
   - Size of parcel suitable for State Park ownership
   - Ease of development, operations and maintenance
   - Connectivity to existing State Park units and/or facilities administered by other public agencies

   Two separate river studies are currently underway; one for the Sacramento River, and another including the Mokelumne, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, San Joaquin, Merced, Kings, Kern and Kawea Rivers. The reports are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2006.

3. *Continue to provide quality recreation programs and interpretive activities, and possibly expand these services depending on staffing availability at Central Valley park units.*

   Status: The Department will assess unit programs to see if they could be increased, improved or expanded. Additional programs will be examined, such as FamCamp and ParkPALS that could be used to enrich the lives of many Central Valley residents.

4. *Focus staff efforts on developing new partnerships and strengthening existing relationships with non-profit organizations, concession operators, and public agencies to expand active and passive use facilities, programs, and services.*

   Status: After the rivers assessment study is completed, efforts will be made to partner with those stakeholders that have a vested interest in those rivers State Parks is recommending for follow-up projects for further study. Concession operators i.e., small boat rentals, bike rentals or food concessionaires will be considered for park

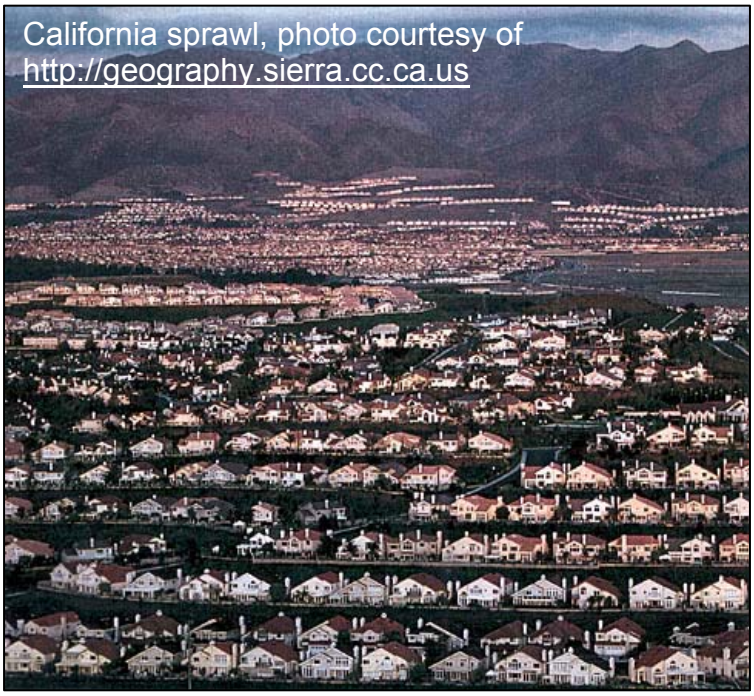
units that would benefit from additional services that could be provided by concessionaires.

## CONCLUSION

The public workshops produced numerous ideas and elicited a significant number of recommendations for the Department to acquire additional lands to be included ultimately as units of the State Park System and develop or redesign existing units. While a number of these acquisition recommendations are clearly of more local or regional significance, there were a variety of suggested acquisitions that merit study for their possible inclusion in the State Park System. However, such analysis is beyond the scope of this report and will have to wait until additional resources can be allocated for their assessment.

The Central Valley Vision effort has placed this important region of the state at the forefront of State Parks' policy deliberations. The Vision's priorities and goals are already incorporated in the Department's Strategic Initiatives, the Department's Acquisition guidelines, and MYCOP. In addition, the Vision will further assist State Parks in achieving its statewide mission while assisting in meeting the localized needs of Central Valley residents as they grapple with explosive growth and crushing infrastructure demands. The Central Valley Vision has been a starting point for discussions about ways the Department can begin to enhance recreational opportunities in the Central Valley and it will continue to serve as a roadmap for future State Park programs in this key geographic area.


Woodland Opera House




Office of Community Involvement, State ParkPALS