



State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act of 2010 Fact Sheet

From the vast stretches of sandy beaches along California's magnificent coastline to the towering redwoods and much-needed recreational areas in the state's bustling urban centers, California's 278 state parks are **priceless public assets** and a **vital legacy for our children and grandchildren**.

But the state's **parks are in peril**. Budget cuts are starving state parks, causing them to fall **severely behind in needed maintenance and repairs**. Twice in the past two years, state parks were **on the brink of being shut down**. Only last-minute budget reprieves kept them open. But nearly 60 state parks will be shut down part-time or their hours of operation reduced because of this year's budget cuts, and more **park closure proposals and budget cuts** are expected next year. California's parks are becoming less available to the public and are at serious risk of irreversible damage.

That is why a statewide ballot measure, slated for November 2010, has been prepared that would create the **State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund**. The fund would provide a stable, reliable and adequate source of funding for the state park system, for wildlife conservation and for increased and equitable access to those resources for all Californians.

Funding would come from an \$18 annual State Park Access Pass surcharge on most California vehicles that would be collected by the Department of Motor Vehicles as part of the annual vehicle license fee, except larger commercial vehicles, mobile homes and permanent trailers. California vehicles subject to the State Park Access Pass surcharge and all occupants of those vehicles would receive **free day use admission to all state parks** throughout the year.

The proposed measure has been submitted to the California Attorney General's office for official ballot title and summary. An exploratory committee, Californians for State Parks and Wildlife Conservation, has been created to consider the feasibility of this measure for the November 2010 statewide ballot. Early supporters include The Nature Conservancy, California State Parks Foundation and Save the Redwoods League.

California State Parks in Peril Because of Chronic Underfunding...

- California's parks, once considered the best in the nation, are **falling apart because of chronic underfunding**. Roofs and **sewage systems leak, restrooms are not cleaned regularly**, bridges have collapsed, trails are washed out, campgrounds and visitor centers are shuttered and buildings and structures throughout the system are **badly deteriorated**.
- With no reliable source of funding, the state parks have accumulated a **backlog of more than \$1 billion in maintenance and repairs**.
- Thousands of scenic acres are **closed to the public** because of reductions in park rangers, and crime has more than doubled. **Destruction and vandalism of the parks** themselves has grown fourfold, and **beachgoers are often unprotected** because of decreases in lifeguards.
- The parks are in such peril that the National Trust for Historic Preservation has named **California state parks one of the 11 most endangered sites in America**.

Protect State Parks and Wildlife by Creating a Conservation Trust Fund...

- To ensure Californians have the **high-quality, well-maintained state park system** they deserve, the proposed statutory measure would establish the State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund in the state treasury

where, by law, it could **only be spent on state parks, wildlife conservation, natural lands and ocean conservation programs**. The Legislature couldn't reallocate the Trust Fund for other uses.

- Funding for the Trust Fund would come from an \$18 annual State Park Access Pass surcharge on all California cars, motorcycles and recreational vehicles that would be collected by the Department of Motor Vehicles as part of the annual vehicle license fee. Larger commercial vehicles (those subject to the Commercial Vehicle Registration Act), mobile homes and permanent trailers would be exempt.
- California vehicles subject to the State Park Access Pass surcharge and all occupants of those vehicles would receive **free day use admission to all state parks throughout the year**, which currently costs as much as \$125 for an annual pass or \$10-\$15 per day. Out-of-state vehicles would continue to pay full entrance fees at parks.
- Trust Fund revenues would amount to approximately \$500 million each year (based on about 28 million registered vehicles) and 85% would be allocated to state parks and 15% to other state wildlife and ocean protection agencies.
- With a new dedicated revenue stream in place, approximately \$130 million of General Fund dollars - that provide a portion of overall state parks funding - would now be available for other vital needs, like schools, health care, social services or public safety.

State Parks Strengthen the Economy and Serve as a Legacy for Future Generations...

- State parks **strengthen the economy** by attracting millions of tourists, who **spend \$4.32 billion annually** in park-related expenditures in California, according to a recent study. It found state parks **visitors spend an average of \$57.63** in surrounding communities per visit. They generate so much economic activity that **every dollar the state spends on state parks generates another \$2.35** for California's treasury.
- Every year, there are **nearly 80 million visits** to state parks, where the abundance of outdoor activities entices visitors to **exercise and lead healthier lifestyles**. Parks contribute to public health by protecting forests and natural areas that are **sources of clean air and water** and by combating climate change by reducing greenhouse gases. They also **protect the state's wide diversity of plants and animals**, preserve an unparalleled collection of historic and cultural assets and provide exciting educational opportunities for young and old alike.

Tough Fiscal & Accountability Safeguards to Protect the Voters' Investment...

- The Trust Fund would be **subject to an independent audit** by the State Auditor every year. The findings would be released to the public, placed on the California Department of Parks and Recreation's website and submitted to the State Legislature for review as part of the state budget.
- A **Citizens' Oversight Committee** would be created to ensure funds from this measure are spent appropriately.
- Audit, oversight and administrative costs of this measure would be limited to just 1% of the annual revenues.

For more information on the proposed ballot measure, please call 818.760.2121 or visit www.yesforstateparks.com.