

Ken Wiseman, Executive Director
Parks Forward

Parks Forward Commission
c/o California State Parks and Recreation Commission
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296



Via email

August 1, 2013

Re: Little Hoover Commission Report

Dear Mr. Wiseman and Commissioners:

The Marin Conservation League (MCL) has been engaged with state parks since MCL's founding in 1934. MCL has identified and helped to acquire many of the state parks in Marin, and we are proud that Angel Island's Mt. Livermore is named after one of our founders. We have a deep and long term commitment to state parks in general and specifically in the six state parks located here in Marin. Each of our parks provides unique opportunities for recreational and educational experiences and are highly valued by the community. In addition, the parks serve an important role in preserving the natural environment.

The Little Hoover Commission report, "Beyond Crisis: Recapturing Excellence in California State Park System," has been discussed at some length within MCL and the following recommendations are not only suggested, but strongly encouraged.

The report identifies six major recommendations, each of which would have significant impact on our state parks. MCL suggests that the recommendations be implemented in phases because it would be too difficult and disruptive to address them all simultaneously. MCL is also emphatic that public input be solicited and considered at each stage.

The Vision developed by the Director is, logically, the first basic decision to be made. Allow time for distribution and public discussion prior to hearings by either the Parks Forward Commission or the Parks and Recreation Commission, especially if it is to be codified. It will take diplomacy to instill the public confidence needed to pursue the major changes suggested. The public and the existing park personnel must buy in to the new vision.

The next logical step is developing criteria for evaluating the "statewide significance" of each state park. Each park should be assessed as to why it was originally acquired and how the acquisition was achieved. Some parks may have been given to the state and include reversionary clauses if no longer used for a state park. Many parks were acquired to preserve habitat for wildlife and plants, or historic or geologic uniqueness and these goals should be recognized and promoted. There should be an assessment of the carrying capacities of each of these sites – how much traffic can safely be accommodated without losing or degrading that

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which was to be preserved? Entrepreneurial exploitation is typically not compatible with preservation. These evaluations must be made prior to pursuing the enterprise model through developing staff skill sets and incentives.

MCL agrees that the state legislature must step up with financial support for the state park system. It will continue to require General Fund support especially for those parks which do not have the capacity to generate revenues but provide protection of special habitats, unique ecological/geological features or historic treasures. The capacity of a park to generate revenue or to attract a large number of visitors should NOT be the major criterion for "statewide significance".

State Parks are a treasure for the entire state population and should be accessible to everyone. Continually raising fees for access is an easy way to generate revenue, but discourages more and more people from the parks. Providing affordable access should be included as one of the goals in the reorganization/restructuring of state parks.

The Marin Conservation League would like to be notified of opportunities for public dialogue and any commission meetings to be held in response to any issues in the Little Hoover Commission Report.

Thank you for hearing our concerns.

Yours truly,



David Schnapf, President

cc: Major General Anthony Jackson, Director, California State Parks
Aaron Robertson, Chief Deputy, California State Parks
Ernest Chung, Chair, California State Park and Recreation Commission
Danita Rodriguez, Superintendent, Marin District, California State Parks
Elizabeth Goldstein, President, California State Parks Foundation
Assembly Member Marc Levine, 10th California Assembly District
Linda Dahl, Director and General Manager, Marin County Parks