

**Californian's Interaction with State Government
Little Hoover Commission
Sacramento, California
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Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing and to share some information related to the Little Hoover Commission's current project on state government's efforts to improve customer service delivery and increase public engagement.

I am a team member of the Department's Transformation Team, which is undertaking positive change for California State Parks. I joined the California State Parks in 1976 and since that time served in a variety of positions including that of Ranger, Facilities and Planning positions, and Senior Management assignments in Sacramento headquarters. I am sitting in for Mr. Steven Szalay, our lead for the Department's Transformation effort.

California's State Park System is a magnificent collection of 279 park units and many protected landscapes covering almost 1.6 million acres of majestic peaks, healthy forests, scenic coastlines, and quiet deserts. It's natural, cultural, historic, aesthetic and recreational values are beyond compare. While its beauty and potential is great, most of the System's operations and facilities are outdated, broken and stuck in time. Its programs and operations are seriously constrained by archaic bureaucratic structures and processes. It looks and feels all of its 150 years of age.

During the past few years the Parks Department has been in constant crisis mode trying to address a multitude of significant challenges as documented by a host of studies, reports, and audits. Although Park services continue to be exemplary, the service levels are declining due primarily to rising costs, declining revenues and mission creep. The Department's challenges include inadequate fiscal management systems, insufficient annual and deferred maintenance, outdated technology, depleted training systems, insufficient marketing, very little diversity, limited appeal to youth and underserved communities, inadequate park development policies, and an antiquated management structure.

The Parks Forward Commission (PFC) was appointed in July of 2013, in accordance with the California State Parks Stewardship Act of 2012 and AB 1478, to recommend improvements for ensuring the State Park System's long-term sustainability. The Commission's primary purpose was "to look beyond the immediate crisis and toward a broader vision for California Parks – a vision of a focused and modernized Department positioned to lead a park system that:

- Values and protects the state's iconic landscapes, natural resources, and cultural heritage;
- Remains relevant and accessible to all Californians and welcomes visitors from around the world;
- Engages and inspires younger generations; and
- Promotes healthy and active lifestyles and communities that are quintessentially Californian."

The California Natural Resources Agency and the State Parks Director commenced a State Parks Transformation process by retaining an advisor with extensive state and local government organizational development experience to identify a series of initiatives that will result in many

positive changes in the State Parks organization. To accomplish these changes, assembled is a talented Transformation Team that has prepared this Plan to transform the State Parks Department over the next two years and beyond. The Plan calls for implementing positive change by completing a number of initiatives that closely follow the PFC's four basic themes:

The Department needs to:

- Make fundamental change to succeed in the future.
- Work productively with new and existing partners to improve and expand facilities, programs and garner more resources.
- Expand park access for all Californians.
- Garner stable and diversified funding, which is imperative for a vibrant park system

Over the next two years the Transformation Team will endeavor to strengthen the California State Park System through a series of initiatives supporting specific goals meant to set the department on a path to a more viable future. Achieving these goals will result in changed policies, procedures, guidelines and organizational structure that support an entrepreneurial, service-oriented, creative and collaborative culture. The initiatives will provide the tools and streamline the processes that have hindered staff and partners in the past, enabling them to become much more effective. Rebuilding trust and credibility both inside and outside the organization is a necessary result of the transformation effort.

- All of the initiatives will be designed and executed with this overall vision in mind. One of the most important initiatives is the development of a Service-Based Budgeting system that enables Park managers to identify and prioritize service levels within its five major programs based on available revenue in any year. Also, Parks must embrace many different cost-effective business models operated by well-trained and motivated employees, volunteers and partners of all types in the future. Expanding innovative and creative partnerships will be key to the success of the department.
- The culture of the department will be characterized by an abiding commitment to expanding and enhancing the visitor experience by means of an enthusiastic, results-oriented spirit fueled by creativity and innovation. There is a strong commitment to excellence, high performance and accountability.

Parks facilities will be better maintained on an annual basis and the deferred maintenance project list adequately identified and ready for financing. Modern technology tools will be in place to support robust revenue raising programs and all Park services.

The department's programs and services will be available to and utilized by a broader group of people, including diverse ethnic communities, youth, elderly and disadvantaged populations. The department will expand and add new services at parks that respond to the interests of these populations, making the department relevant to all Californians. Protection and enhancement of natural and cultural resources will continue to be a high priority for the Department. The Department's many education programs will be enhanced to provide a larger contribution to K – 12 school curriculum, school district partnerships will be increased and expanded.

The department's financial structure will be stabilized over time by realigning revenue and expenditure categories to create proper operational incentives. For example, fee-based revenue

should generally pay for visitor related services. In addition, the Service-Based Budgeting system will provide credible financial data enabling the department to operate specific service levels within available revenue each year. All management systems and department policies will benefit from a data driven approach to positive changes.

Many more positive changes need to occur in future years through an internal continuous improvement process. However, after two years of Transforming Parks, the department will be well positioned to excel in all its core programs and to build on its proud history of preservation and recreation.

Transformation Team Strategic Goals and Initiatives

1. Develop Excellent Management Systems.
2. Maintain High Quality Operations and Public Service.
3. Create Meaningful Connections and Relevancy to People.
4. Protect and Enhance Natural and Cultural Resources.

Over the next two years, the Transformation Team will adhere to the following core values as it works on the initiatives in an effort to make positive structural and sustainable changes to the Parks Department that will move it into the 2017 Desired Future State: Diversity; Respect; Transparency; and Accountability.

A dynamic Draft Transformation Plan document has been prepared and is on the Transformation Website and is also attached. It is fully expected that new initiatives will be identified as the transformation process is undertaken, additionally existing initiatives will change by combining or splitting as full data is realized. The current draft plan contains 30 Initiatives that will be undertaken by the Transformation Team through 8 Committees:

- Budget & Finance
- Human Resources
- Planning & Innovation
- Partnerships
- Relevancy (Engagement & Outreach to Underserved Communities)
- Operations
- Modernization
- Natural & Cultural Resources

Partners and Stakeholders of all types are being recruited as members, subcommittee members, and contributors. The Transformation team has prioritized the most urgent 10 Initiatives and the Committees are working on them first:

1. Develop a Service-Based Budget Program
2. Streamline the Staff Hiring process
3. Identify, Analyze and Implement Technology Improvements
4. Enhance & Develop Outreach Services to Underserved Communities
5. Document & Communicate the Parks Story
6. Develop a New Marketing Plan
7. Establish a New & Enhanced Revenue Generation Program
8. Review & Update Policies/Procedures that enable Partnerships for all Parks Operations & Develop a Management Structure that fosters positive relationships with new & existing Partners.

9. Review the existing department Organizational Structure, Analyze Options, Implement Beneficial Changes and Align Position Classifications, Qualifications & Org Structure with the 2017 Vision.
10. Increase partnerships with Universities, Native American Tribes, Land Trusts, & other Stakeholders to identify research needs & develop Best practices to protect & Preserve Natural & Cultural Resources.

The remaining 20 Initiatives are also very important, just not as urgent comparatively. Taken separately, these 30 Initiatives are interesting and important. Taken together they represent monumental positive change for the department. Current Scope Documents for each initiative are posted on the Transformation Website.

Relationship to Little Hoover Commission Report on State Parks

The Little Hoover Commission produced “*Beyond Crisis: Recapturing Excellence in California’s State Park System*” report in March 2013 made 6 recommendations to help focus the state’s efforts and to galvanize support for the department’s immense and important task of transformation ahead. Four of the six recommendations align with current prioritized and launched top 10 initiatives from the Transformation Action Plan. The other recommendations will be addressed within the context of the remaining initiatives.

Recommendation 1: The state should develop and communicate a vision for the California Department of Parks and Recreation that articulates its mission, its evolving role and the importance of its relationships to other agencies, organizations and groups.

This recommendation is in alignment with Initiatives #5, 6, 8, and 10.

Recommendation 3: To enable California’s state parks to generate more revenue, the state must transition from a model of centralized state control to a more enterprise-based operating model that serves the mission of protecting natural and historical assets and increasing public access and enjoyment of these assets.

This recommendation is in alignment with Initiatives #3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Recommendation 5: The Director should develop incentives and performance measures for the department to incentivize improved outcomes and submit annual performance reports to the State Park and Recreation Commission for review and comment.

This recommendation is in alignment with Initiatives #3, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Recommendation 6: The department’s new operating model will require a variety of skill sets, some of which do not currently reside within the Department of Parks and Recreation. The department should be given the flexibility to hire and promote employees who demonstrate the skills to manage and operate state parks in accordance with the mission of natural and cultural preservation, public access and education.

This recommendation is in alignment with Initiatives #2, 4, 8 and 9.

What Transformation has been completed to Date?

Transformation did not independently start with the establishment of a Transformation Plan and/or a Team. There are actions the Department has been taking to improve interactions with our constituency and improve our operational procedures. These include modernization, increasing access and relevance to diverse populations and broadening candidate pool for park leadership.

Modernizing the system—

In August, the Department launched Google Trekker in 14 state parks in the Bay area and Monterey districts. Now, for the first time, 360 degree images of 25 trails are available on line using the Google Trekker street view technology. We hope to continue this unique partnership with Google and announce other projects in the future.

We've installed credit and debit card readers across the system. Visitors can now use credit or debit cards at 120 of our state parks.

Partnered with Parks Forward Commission and Stamen Design to develop "CaliParks", a bilingual phone app and California's first park finder application covering every park in the state. Find places where you can do everything from camping to climbing to learning about California's history, plan a trip, share images and comments, and invite friends to join you. Now there's an app for that.

We have launched a pilot project in Orange Coast District using technology that allows visitors to pay their day use fee using their smartphones.

In the next few months we will be launching a State Parks Gift Card pilot project where a visitor can purchase a gift card that can be used to pay for things like park entrance fees, camping, and other amenities.

Increasing Access and relevance to diverse populations—

Camping Cabins, statewide, there are approximately 15,000 campsites, with almost 700 alternative camping facilities, including cabins. We are working toward adding cabins through a unique partnership with philanthropic partners. We have a larger pilot project at Angel Island for 13 cabins.

We have excellent programs throughout the state park system, including those that serve visitors from diverse backgrounds. We are examining ways to scale these programs up and increase awareness and utilization by a broader spectrum of users.

Broadening the Candidate Pool for Park Leadership--

On May 7th, the State Personnel Board approved a new classification which allowed State Parks to broaden the candidate pool for District Superintendent positions. Previously, the Department was restricted to filling District Superintendent positions only with those from a peace officer background. Now the new classification allows for candidates from broader disciplines and those from outside state service.

Engagement and Transparency

To engage staff, our stake holders and the general public we have instituted a number of processes to enhance and incorporate recommendations for positive change. Most recently, on May 20th, we held an engagement summit where a team, including the Director, Mr. Steve Szalay, and two of the Transformation team leaders members addressed employees throughout the state using videoconferencing technology. Teams were assembled at 15 locations in the state park system to engage groups both in person and using modern technology. The presentation also included a live questions and answer session, allowing staff to interact with the members in real time.

All Levels

- Communication Consultant
- Ongoing Communications Plan

Public and Stakeholders

- Website: General Public can make suggestions. Includes the Action Plan, Scoping Documents, and Performance Dashboard

Stakeholders

- High Level Transformation Advisory Committee
- Mini-Summit meetings

Internal Department Communications

- Tell Steve Extranet: Employees can send anonymous email for recommendations and comments
- Quarterly Parks Leadership Group (65-75 Top Managers) meetings
- May 20th Engagement Summit
- Employee Engagement Meetings

Summary

This Transformation of California State Parks is and will continue to be a dynamic and flexible framework document throughout the two year Transformation Process and beyond. The initiatives will be modified as the Team moves from positive change concepts to deliverables, implementation and outcomes. The Team will make course corrections and adjustments as they learn more about issues, obstacles and opportunities. The Transformation Plan will be a direction, a compass setting, not a GPS location.

Also, it is anticipated that the initiatives will be completed and implemented on a flow basis. The Team will not work through the two year time period and then publish a final report. The Team will move quickly from words to action.

Substantive work has been completed by the Parks Forward Commission and others on the need for positive change to ensure a vibrant, efficient and relevant California State Park System in the future. Positive changes have already commenced and it is now time for the formal Transformation Process to begin.

In closing, it is an exciting time for the California State Parks. As a department, we take great pride in the accomplishments we have collectively achieved during the past 150 years. We also look forward to the next 150 years and to continuing to identify new and innovative ways to meet our mission and serve our customers.