

Parks, Public Lands and Waterways Policy Recommendations for California Governor Gavin Newsom

Establishing a Legacy of Stewardship and Engagement



Berkeley Institute for
Parks, People, and Biodiversity



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January 2019



January 2, 2019

Governor-Elect Gavin Newsom
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Recommendations to Protect California's Parks, Public Lands and Waterways

Dear Governor-Elect Newsom:

Thank you for your continuing leadership to protect California's parks, public lands and waterways and your support of the National Park Service's Centennial in 2016. These resources are vital to the quality of life enjoyed by California's residents and drive our multi-billion dollar tourism and recreation industries that support hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Your leadership to protect these resources over the next eight years is critical given our changing climate and a federal administration that does not share California's environmental values.

The attached paper identifies priority actions your Administration can take to protect our parks, public lands, and waterways for the enjoyment of current and future generations. These actions will:

- Protect California's parks, public lands and waterways from federal retrenchment.
- Ensure California's parks, public lands and waterways foster biodiversity and stay resilient despite extreme wildfire, extended drought, and other effects of our changing climate.
- Expand opportunities for California's increasingly diverse population to enjoy California's outdoor resources.
- Revitalize the California State Parks system and its contribution to jobs and the economy.

Your upcoming inaugural address provides an important opportunity to highlight your commitment to protecting our state's natural heritage. Please affirm your commitment in your inaugural address and inspire leaders across America to join you in protecting our national inheritance.

We stand ready to help you advance the attached recommendations.

Sincerely,

Michael Mantell, President
Resources Legacy Fund

Jonathan B. Jaryis, Executive Director
Berkeley Institute for Parks, People & Biodiversity

Protecting California's Parks, Public Lands and Waterways A Call for Governor Newsom's Continuing Leadership

"From its dramatic coastline to dense forests, majestic mountains and diverse desert ecosystems, California is unparalleled in its natural beauty. Our state remains at the forefront of environmental leadership as we tackle some of the planet's greatest challenges." (gavinnewsom.com; 2018)

Why it Matters

Public lands and waterways, including state and national parks, national monuments, forests, deserts, rivers, and the coast are part of the heart and soul of California. Our state is a world biodiversity hotspot amid a world-wide extinction crisis, and public lands and waterways are crucial to maintaining our rich constellation of plant and wildlife species. These resources drive California's outdoor lifestyle and contribute to residents' high quality of life. Outdoor recreation contributes more than \$90 billion each year to our economy and sustains more than 690,000 jobs. As significantly, these resources provide clean air and water for our families, farms, and businesses.

Our public lands and waterways face unparalleled threats from a warming climate that exacerbates wildfire and drought, decades of under-investment, and federal efforts to revoke protections. At the same time, we increasingly appreciate the ability of public lands to sequester carbon, buffer ecosystems from climate change effects, store and purify water, foster biodiversity, improve public health, and support recreation and tourism. We also value public lands for their intrinsic worth.

A Call to Action

Governor Newsom established a strong environmental record as Lieutenant Governor, Chair of the State Lands Commission, and Mayor of San Francisco. His leadership as Governor is needed more now than ever to protect cherished public lands and waterways and to ensure a healthy and accessible environment for our children and future generations.

The actions outlined below provide a pathway for Governor Newsom to defend these resources and expand opportunities for California's increasingly diverse residents to enjoy the state's great outdoors. The recommendations are based upon these principles:

- California's public lands and waterways will be managed to enhance their natural integrity and ability to adapt to a changing climate.
- Federal policies that negatively impact California's public lands and waterways will be strenuously opposed.
- California's leaders, policymakers, and residents will be environmentally literate and actively engaged in planning for the future of the state's natural resources.
- All Californians will have equal access to public lands and waterways.

Protect California's Public Lands and Waterways from Federal Retrenchment

Oppose actions that may harm California's public lands and waterways

- Defend California's National Monuments and National Parks from boundary and management plan changes that could lead to damage of natural, cultural, and historic resources or deter public access.
- Protect our deserts while advancing renewable energy by opposing efforts to weaken Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan implementation.
- Defend the coast from increased offshore oil and gas leasing and development and mining in federal waters and oppose efforts to weaken the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, federal Coastal Zone Management Act, or other federal coastal and ocean protection laws.
- Resist federal efforts to weaken Clean Water Act implementation by excluding significant waterways from protection under this cornerstone federal environmental law.
- Oppose efforts to sell off or transfer sensitive public lands or weaken federal environmental protection laws including the National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Endangered Species Act, Antiquities Act, Waters of the U.S., Wilderness Act, National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, the methane/waste regulation, and oil, gas and coal valuation rule.
- Ensure state agencies and the Attorney General have adequate budget and staffing resources to effectively monitor, analyze, and counter federal actions that threaten our natural resources including, when necessary, litigation.

Act to protect our federal public lands and waterways

- Conserve threatened and endangered species by listing additional federally-protected plants and animals under the California Endangered Species Act as a backstop to potential weakening of federal laws.
- Support congressional reauthorization and dedicated funding of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to support federal, state, and local park and conservation projects.
- Protect pristine landscapes and priority rivers by supporting congressional efforts to increase Wilderness Act and National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act designations.
- Promote sound stewardship of federal public lands and waterways by engaging in federal management planning efforts for national forests, Bureau of Land Management lands, and fish and wildlife refuges to ensure natural, cultural, and historic resources are protected and properly managed.
- Advance restoration of damaged forest watersheds to benefit water supplies, fish and wildlife, and public access.
- Advocate for adequate funding for federal agencies to effectively manage, restore, and improve public lands and waterways and access to them, as well as to increase climate change adaptation and resilience.
- Continue California State Park's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division's assistance to federal land managers to effectively manage OHV activities to protect public lands and waterways and restore resources that may be damaged.
- Support meaningful public participation for all Californians, including Native American Tribes and communities of color, in federal land use planning, leasing, and permitting decisions on public lands and forests.

Build national coalitions to protect America's natural resources

- Build coalitions with other western governors to protect public lands and waterways in the West and defend federal environmental laws.
- Build coalitions with governors across America to protect coastal and ocean resources from expanded offshore oil and gas drilling and mining activities.

Take Direct State Action to Protect California's Public Lands and Waterways

Support state regulations, policies, and funding to advance conservation

- Maintain the integrity of our environmental laws including the California Environmental Quality Act, the California Endangered Species Act, the California Surface Mining & Reclamation Act, the Coastal Act, and the California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- Direct State agencies to protect California deserts from groundwater pumping, mining, and development that could diminish natural springs and threaten sensitive ecological processes, natural areas, and wildlife.
- Support state and federal policies to keep our most sensitive public lands and waterways off-limits to potentially harmful activities including oil and gas development and mining, and ensure that the appropriate areas open to these activities are managed to sustain environmental values.
- Effectively implement Proposition 64 to increase participation in the legal cannabis market, close and remediate illegal grow sites that damage environmental resources, and direct cannabis tax revenues to watershed restoration and operation and stewardship of areas managed by State Parks and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Restore at least half of California's redwood forests through partnerships between state, federal, and private land managers and nonprofit organizations to secure watershed protection, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration benefits.

Ensure California's Public Lands and Waterways Become More Resilient in the Face of a Changing Climate

Make strategic budget investments in conservation

- Fund watershed restoration projects to increase climate resilience, improve water supply and quality, restore fish and wildlife habitat, sequester carbon, and provide additional benefits.
- Provide the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Wildlife with needed funding and staffing to better manage fish, wildlife, and park resources and promote adaptation to climate change.
- Invest in research to assess climate-related threats to public lands and waterways and inform management decisions, including research by the University of California, the UC Natural Reserve System, the California State University system, and other public agency scientists.
- Fund and implement the state's Salton Sea Management Program Phase 1: 10-Year Plan to avoid a public health and environmental disaster and protect surrounding public lands.
- Develop a community guide to climate adaptation that identifies risks to communities and natural resources and recommends environmentally sensitive adaptation and resilience strategies.

Protect, restore, and increase resilience of critical natural resources

- Conserve critical migration corridors through acquisition and regulation to enable wildlife and native plants to migrate in response to climate change, consistent with the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project and other analyses.
- Remove barriers and upgrade outdated infrastructure that block fish passage, including removing the Klamath River dams in Northern California, Matilija Dam in Ventura County, and others.
- Direct Caltrans and the California Transportation Commission to identify transportation infrastructure and utility corridors that block fish and wildlife migration and fund projects to provide safer fish and wildlife crossings to reduce habitat fragmentation and help populations adapt to climate change.
- Reconnect the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers to their floodplains to increase flood control for vulnerable communities, recharge depleted groundwater basins, and revitalize waterways for recreation, fish, and wildlife.
- Advance efficient multi-agency environmental review to speed implementation of restoration and adaptation projects that improve the health and climate adaptability of forest, wetland, meadow, dune, desert, and other ecosystems.
- Increase support for fuel reduction crews and projects, including use of prescribed fire, to safeguard natural and human communities adjacent to public lands.

Expand Opportunities for an Increasingly Diverse Population to Enjoy California's Outdoor Resources

Ensure all Californians benefit from access to parks and public lands

- Engage disadvantaged and diverse communities in Proposition 68 implementation and ensure that at least 40 percent of the funding from this \$4.1 billion parks and water bond measure benefit disadvantaged communities, as the measure directs.
- Direct transportation funding to better connect underserved communities to national, state, and local public lands and waterways.
- Expand, fund, and involve the California Conservation Corps and local conservation corps in revitalizing and improving state and local parks and increasing the resilience of natural and human communities to the impacts of climate change, while creating jobs and training for youth from disadvantaged communities.
- Restore urban waterways, including the Los Angeles and San Gabriel rivers, to provide greater access to trails and open space for underserved communities.
- Establish a "California Green School Yards" program to provide incentives to school districts to "green" their play yards and make them available as parks for local communities during non-school hours.
- Create a California Native American Tribal Stewardship Council to advise the Governor and land management agencies on traditional ecological knowledge and practices and ensure these recommendations are implemented and incorporated into land management planning.
- Integrate "California's Environmental Principles and Concepts" into curriculum standards and framework documents to advance broader understanding of environmental issues.

Revitalize California's State Park System

Make California's State Park system a world-class model

- Implement the "Recommendations of the Parks Forward Initiative," which chart a ten-year vision for a modern, sustainable, and accessible park system with collaborative park management and broad public and stakeholder engagement.
- Partner with the new statewide nonprofit Parks California and the Parks Now coalition on park projects and programs to leverage public and private dollars, preserve key natural and cultural resources, improve visitor experiences, and expand access to public lands and waterways for all communities.
- Accelerate investments to address State Park's \$1.5 billion deferred maintenance backlog, prioritizing sustainable and green infrastructure solutions for recognized climate threats.
- Establish lower-cost accommodations in State Parks and along the coast for the enjoyment of California residents and visitors.
- Create new ongoing funding sources to support effective management and restoration of state park and wildlife areas and consider new bond funding to protect and increase public access, where appropriate.
- Expand the California State Park system to meet the future demands of a growing and diversifying California population, with a focus on underserved communities.
- Encourage coalitions between regional park operators, Native American Tribes, nonprofit organizations, and California State Parks to increase co-management opportunities.
- Secure a long-term lease extension for San Onofre State Beach, California's fifth most popular state park, from the U.S. Navy. (Current lease will otherwise expire in 2021.)
- Engage State Parks on the development of the 2020 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, with an emphasis on climate resilience and equity in access to the outdoors for all Californians.