



CREATING IMPACT:

A STUDY OF
**NONPROFIT
PARTNERSHIP**

IN CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 Executive Summary

10 Introduction

16 The Value Propositions of Nonprofit Partnerships

24 Partners in Profile: Nonprofit Partnership Authorities

28 Partners in Profile: Summary Data of Nonprofit Partners

35 Study Findings: Key Themes

44 Recommendations

47 Conclusion

48 Appendices

60 Acknowledgements

Cover images clockwise from top left:

Castro Adobe, Photo: Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

Sue Meg State Park, Photo: Parks California

Redwoods National and State Parks, Photo: Save the Redwoods League

Fort Ross State Historic Park, Photo: California State Parks

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

Photo: California State Parks

EXECUTIVE **SUMMARY**

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

INTRODUCTION

Parks are a public resource embedded within landscapes and communities. California's state park system encompasses 279 units of diverse resources from beaches to historic sites, urban corridors, and vast wild areas. The system is the largest and most diverse state park system in the world, rivaling entire national park systems in many other nations. Because of this complexity, there will always be a need for the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) to embrace and maintain partnerships with many stakeholders. An opportunity was highlighted by the 2015 Parks Forward Commission, who called for State Parks to invest in partnerships to foster innovation and bring additional expertise, capacity, and resources to the state parks system.

Partnership is not new to State Parks. From their inception, California's state parks were forged in partnership with community leaders and organizations. Among a constellation of

concessions businesses, volunteers, and others supporting State Parks, nonprofits are invaluable partners that amplify the reach of parks' own community engagement efforts, foster ongoing connection to parks with added programming and events, leverage public investments with additional sources of funding, and build onramps that increase park access to ever more Californians in support of State Parks' mission.

The California State Parks Nonprofit Partnership Study seeks to build a broad understanding of the contributions of cooperating associations, nonprofit operators and co-managers, and other nonprofit donors and program partners supporting state parks across California. The study also highlights best practices in partnership that can help parks and their nonprofit partners reach their fullest potential—together.

Propelled by State Parks' vision and leadership, these partnerships can achieve stunning results and provide extraordinary experiences for Californians and the state's visitors.

STUDY GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

The California State Parks Nonprofit Partnership Study is a collaboration between Parks California, California State Parks Foundation, California League of Park Associations, State Parks' Partnerships Division, and the research team, as well as representatives from the nonprofit partner community.

Potrero Group, a California-based research and management consulting firm supporting public lands organizations and their partners, served as the primary project manager and research lead.

STUDY GOALS

- ✦ *Build a broad understanding of the contributions of nonprofit partners supporting state parks across California.*
- ✦ *Celebrate the accomplishments of nonprofit partners and highlight best practices in the field.*
- ✦ *Establish a baseline for future studies of State Parks' nonprofit partners and illuminate areas for further research.*
- ✦ *Identify opportunities to further nonprofit partnership with State Parks and make relevant recommendations.*

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to gather data on State Parks' nonprofit partners, including a survey, an IRS Form 990 review, focus groups, case studies, and individual interviews.

Combining data from these sources, Potrero Group identified recurring themes across research components to characterize the field of nonprofit partnership, examine enablers of successes and current challenges, identify trends affecting nonprofit partnerships, and make recommendations.

THE VALUE PROPOSITIONS *of Nonprofit Partnerships*

Californians care deeply about their natural and cultural resources and are willing to dedicate public resources toward their protection and stewardship. Voters have voiced their support for parks time and again, passing measures investing billions in California State Parks. Park

employees, nonprofit partners, and visitors alike support a well-funded state parks system.

State parks also exist within a complex ecosystem of connected landscapes, communities, and users with overlapping interests. While the state retains ultimate responsibility for its parks,

many nonprofit partners provide immense value to the state park system and constituents. The study identified numerous important benefits of nonprofit partnerships to State Parks, including:

- *Leveraging public funding with private investment to enhance visitor experience*
- *Broadening opportunities for local community members to connect with and invest in ongoing relationships with parks*
- *Bringing specialized expertise to park projects and programs that increase access*
- *Catalyzing innovation by introducing new relationships, resources, and programs to parks and park*

systems at large

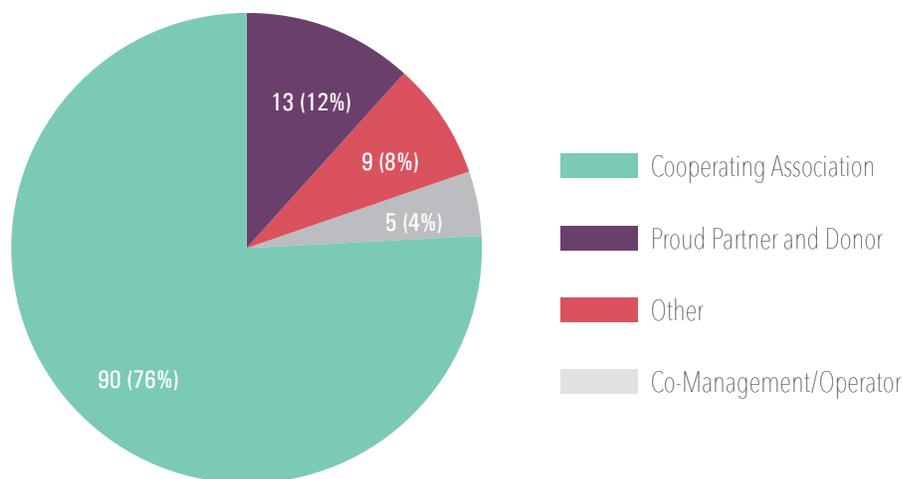
- *Closing time-sensitive deals on behalf of the state when delay would limit opportunities*
- *Convening common interests toward large goals with many stakeholders*
- *Inviting important perspectives from marginalized stakeholders*
- *Contributing to resilience in times of crisis*
- *Encouraging public participation in issues affecting parks*
- *Boosting workforce development, skills building, confidence, and morale*

SUMMARY DATA

of Nonprofit Partners and Activities

The study focuses on nonprofit partners to State Parks with a formal partnership agreement. At the time of this study, the California State Parks Partnership Division reported 117 formal partnership agreements with 111 nonprofit organizations.

Executive Summary Figure 1. Nonprofit Partners by Agreement Type



Nonprofit partners can make direct cash contributions to State Parks, but they also contribute in-kind staff and volunteer support as well as programmatic support that helps fulfill and amplify State Parks’ mission. In addition to programmatic contributions, nonprofit partners bring diverse strengths

and expertise to their partnerships. In some cases, nonprofits provide visitor services and interpretive retail where State Parks could not otherwise staff and support them. While State Parks staff are critical to planning and maintaining alignment with the parks' mission, there is always room to broaden, expand, and reach more visitors with help from mission-aligned partners.

Executive Summary Figure 2. Nonprofit Partner Programs and Activities

ACTIVITY	# OF ORGANIZATIONS	% OF ORGANIZATIONS
Retail sales	40	78%
Other educational or interpretive programs	38	75%
Produce park informational/collateral materials	37	73%
Staff- or docent-led tours	31	61%
Volunteer programs	30	59%
Self-guided tours or exhibits	27	53%
Staff information or visitor centers	26	51%
Transportation for schools or other groups	24	47%
Maintenance of trails, buildings, or other facilities	22	43%
Fee programs such as lectures, classes, tours, or performances	20	39%
Cultural or historic resource management/preservation	19	37%
Natural resource management	17	33%
Formal multi-stakeholder partnership engagements	15	29%
Other	14	27%
Support PORTS videocasts	13	25%
Manage facilities rentals for weddings and events	9	18%
Manage fee collection for park entry	9	18%

Executive Summary Figure 3. Nonprofit Partners in Summary (Survey Data)

	AVERAGE	MEDIAN
Age of Organization	38 years	40 years
Operating Size	N/A	\$100,001–\$500,000
Organizations with CEO/Executive Director	56%	N/A
Years CEO/ED Has Served	5.6 years	4 years
Board Members per Organization	10.3	9
Employees	10.6 FTE	2 FTE
Active Volunteers	96.8	80

The median age of nonprofit partner organizations is 40 years, representing a period of growth in the sector in the 1970s and 1980s when many cooperating associations were founded. A little over half of nonprofits surveyed employ an executive director or CEO (56%). The other 44% are run by an all-volunteer board of directors. These nonprofits bring significant volunteer support to parks on top of State Parks’ own programs; each organization supports a median of 80 active volunteers, with some supporting as many as 275 volunteers each year.

Cooperating associations comprise a large majority of nonprofit partners. They are State Parks’ primary model for nonprofit partnership and have played an integral role in park operations for decades. The California League of Park Associations (CALPA), the primary membership association supporting these partners, has collected and compiled recent IRS form 990 data (FY2016–2020) in support of this study.

The figure below characterizes the financials of cooperating associations. A small number of large organizations skew mean averages; the median provides a profile of most typical organizations. While the larger partners created powerful impact, the nonmonetary contributions made by small, all-volunteer organizations is often invaluable. These smaller organizational partners, sometimes working in very remote and underserved areas of the state, are essential to the functioning of many park units—often providing visitor services that would otherwise not be available. Their smaller budgets make them vulnerable to the ups and downs of economic cycles.

It should be noted that cooperating associations add immense contributions (e.g., volunteer service, stewardship, and advocacy) not captured in the financial information.

Executive Summary Figure 4. Cooperating Associations Financials and Contributions (multi-year average of available IRS form 990 data)

	AVERAGE	MEDIAN	TOTALS
Annual Total Expenses	\$1,464,582	\$101,163	\$111,308,217
Annual Total Revenue	\$1,679,530	\$134,845	\$129,323,802
Annual Total Contributions to Each Organization	\$895,799	\$62,716	\$66,289,140
Annual Total Contributions to California State Parks	\$179,554	\$22,069	\$15,621,172

KEY STUDY THEMES AND FINDINGS SUMMARY

The following themes emerged from study research. These findings are organized under three concepts: *enablers of successful partnership*, *current circumstances affecting success*, and *the path ahead for partnerships*.

1

ENABLERS OF SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

1. For partnerships to be successful, their value and purpose must be articulated, understood, and embraced at all levels by State Parks and at the nonprofit.
2. Communication and peer-to-peer collaboration are the foundation of successful partnerships.
3. Partnerships require strong alignment toward shared goals that prioritize State Parks' mission and a culture that recognizes partners' contributions as well as their constraints.
4. It can be beneficial for partner organizations to focus and specialize.

2

CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING SUCCESS

1. Limited capacity stresses partnerships and can lead to missed opportunities.
2. In many cases, the norms and working agreements between parks and their nonprofit partners need to be updated.

3

THE PATH AHEAD FOR PARTNERSHIPS

1. There is a critical need for resilience across the California State Parks System.
2. This is a pivotal moment for partnerships.
3. Partners are interested in better serving all Californians but few partners have taken significant steps to address diversity, equity, and inclusion.
4. Partnerships with California Native American tribes are developing, and their unique context deserves its own attention.
5. Multi-agency, landscape-level conservation is a rising trend and nonprofit partners are likely to continue playing a crucial role facilitating these efforts.



Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park
Photo: Parks California

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Nonprofit partnerships are key to achieving State Parks' ambitious conservation, equity, and access goals and increasing the system's resiliency during challenging times. To further this field and help nonprofit partnerships flourish, State Parks, its nonprofit partners, and statewide support organizations could take the following actions.

Generate systemic support for partnership across divisions of State Parks and among other state-level stakeholders.

1. Identify opportunities to interpret partner agreements more expansively and address barriers and constraints limiting timely execution of projects.
2. Expand opportunities for nonprofit partners to help State Parks recruit, hire, and retain employees with strong partnership skills.
3. Examine ways State Parks can expand its partnerships to reach more Californians.
4. Promote continuous learning and development on the value of partnership, enablers of success, and collaboration skills and processes among State Parks staff and partner staff.

CONCLUSION

The California State Parks system embraces partnerships—not because the Department can't manage its resources, but because the resources in its care require collaborative stewardship. Robust partnerships bring enormous leverage and impact to continue strengthening this remarkable system. No state park is a contained system: its lands and waterways face threats that extend beyond parks' borders, and its cultural and historical resources lose their value and relevance without an engaged public. By furthering its commitment to nonprofit partnerships and elevating best practices, State Parks can increase its resilience, expand its capacity, and provide access to more Californians.

State Parks and its nonprofit partners are on an ambitious path to embrace landscape-level conservation, lead efforts on equity and access, rehabilitate aging infrastructure across the state, and enhance the visitor experience to a renewed degree of excellence. These efforts will require even more leadership, intention, and investment across the State Parks system and its nonprofit partners. When these working relationships are strong, California's nonprofit partnerships produce results far greater than the sum of their parts.

INTRODUCTION

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

Partnership is not new to State Parks. In fact, at their origin, California's state parks were forged in partnership with community leaders and organizations. Sempervirens Fund and Save the Redwoods League were among the first organizations to call for a State Parks system protecting sensitive resources for the benefit and enjoyment of all, and they remain important state park partners to this day. Visionary State Park Director William Penn Mott, Jr. founded the California State Parks Foundation in 1976, which helped to greatly expand the system by purchasing and holding new parklands. Over the years, passionate volunteers have formed friends groups and cooperating associations supporting 139 park units across the state. These groups are grassroots organizations formed by



Parks are a public resource embedded within landscapes and communities. There will always be a need for State Parks to embrace partnerships with many stakeholders.

local citizens who are a passionate about their state parks. As Heidi Doyle, executive director of the Sierra State Parks Foundation puts it, "Every [nonprofit] park partner started out as a group of people gathered around a kitchen table."

Parks are a public resource embedded within landscapes and communities, and there will always be a need for the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) to embrace and maintain partnerships with many stakeholders. Among a constellation of concessions businesses, volunteers, and others supporting State Parks, nonprofits are invaluable partners that amplify the reach of parks' own community engagement efforts, foster ongoing connection to parks with added programming and events, leverage public investments with additional sources of funding, and build on-ramps that increase park access to ever more Californians in support of State Parks' mission. Propelled by State Parks' vision and leadership, these partnerships can achieve stunning results and provide extraordinary experiences for Californians and the state's visitors.

This study aims to create broad understanding of nonprofit partners' contributions to the State Parks system and to highlight best practices that can help parks and their nonprofit partners reach their fullest potential—together.



Folsom Lake State Recreation Area
Photo: California State Parks

BACKGROUND: CALIFORNIA'S PARTNERSHIP CONTEXT

Ten years ago, State Parks stood at a crossroads. The fiscal crisis of 2011–2012 produced a call to action that activated State Parks' leadership and staff, the governor, the legislature, and members of the philanthropic community to come together to address our state parks' vulnerabilities—not only through increased funding, but with a renewed vision of what a world-class park system could and should provide all Californians, supported by fundamental transformations to State Parks' structures and systems. The Parks Forward Commission (the Commission), enabled by the California State Park Stewardship Act of 2012 and funded by AB 1478 with further support through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Resources Legacy Fund representing philanthropy, put forward an ambitious vision for state parks in its 2015 Final Report. This report included a two-year implementation plan and further steps over the next ten years to achieve a “2025 Park Vision.”

The Commission recognized that State Parks could not fulfill its mission alone. They called for State Parks to invest in partnerships to foster innovation and bring additional expertise, capacity, and resources to the State Parks system.

The Parks Forward Commission's recommendations were furthered by a Transition Team of State Parks staff who led many initiatives, improvements, and innovations across the system. Among these was the creation of a new Partnerships Division within State Parks, dedicating staff and resources to support and encourage partnerships. A statewide nonprofit partner organization, Parks California, was also established (enabled through special legislation under Public Resources Code 521) to aid State Parks in its mission and forward joint priorities (PRC 523). These have included developing statewide programs to increase park access for all Californians, re-granting funds to local organizations that can further the state's priorities in the field, and leveraging public funding with private investment.

THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDED THE FOLLOWING IN THEIR REPORT:

- *Improve the organizational structure and capacity within the Department to work closely with public agencies, California Indian tribes, nonprofit organizations, businesses, volunteers, civic leaders, and other partners and provide the resources necessary to facilitate, develop, and manage partnerships.*
- *Create incentives to reward innovation and partnerships and provide flexibility and support to encourage the Department to work effectively with partners.*
- *Enhance the Department's ability to accept services, temporary staffing, resources, and projects developed by partners.*

With new initiatives prioritizing increasing park access and equity, such as AB 209's "Outdoors for All" and California's 30x30 initiative, partnerships are critical in reaching more Californians, achieving the state's ambitious, multi-agency conservation goals, and increasing resiliency across the state parks system. Although partnerships have long been valued in state parks, development of partnerships across the state is uneven, and it is still unclear whether

partnerships are well understood among state-level stakeholders and across State Parks as a whole. A necessary step to unlock partnerships' potential may be to simply raise awareness about the immense value partnerships provide when leveraging these organizations' unique strengths (see "*The Value Propositions of Nonprofit Partnerships*," p.16).

This study of California State Parks' nonprofit partnerships provides an understanding of these partners and their contributions and makes recommendations for further advancement through increasing coordination and collaboration, improving outcomes, and sharing best practices among the large community of nonprofits involved in supporting California State Parks. This study represents a snapshot in time and is not intended to be a comprehensive look at all partnerships. Nonprofits are but a piece of State Parks' complex array of partnerships. Our hope is that other partners—concessioners (the business partners who operate hotels, restaurants, and other services in parks), Tribal Nations, sister agencies, universities, and volunteers, among others—will be examined and represented in future studies. California's state parks will be strengthened by the development and maturation of its partnership ecosystem. This will take time, leadership, and skill development throughout State Parks and its intricate matrix of essential partnerships.



Photo: California State Parks

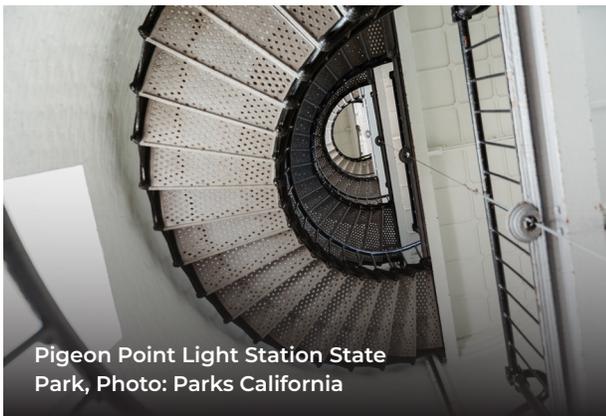
STUDY OVERVIEW

The **California State Parks Nonprofit Partnership Study** seeks to build a broad understanding of the contributions of cooperating associations, nonprofit operators and co-managers, and other nonprofit donors and program partners supporting state parks across California, and to highlight best practices in partnership.

STUDY GOALS

- *Build a broad understanding of the contributions of nonprofit partners supporting state parks across California.*
- *Celebrate the accomplishments of nonprofit partners and highlight best practices in the field.*
- *Establish a baseline for future studies of State Parks' nonprofit partners and illuminate areas for further research.*
- *Identify opportunities to further nonprofit partnership with State Parks and make relevant recommendations.*

Led by Parks California, the study is a collaboration among California State Parks Foundation (CSPF), California League of Park Associations (CALPA), and State Parks' Partnerships Division, as well as representatives from the nonprofit partner community. Potrero Group, a California-based research and management consulting firm supporting public lands organizations and their partners served as the primary project manager and research lead.



Pigeon Point Light Station State Park, Photo: Parks California

METHODOLOGY

Potrero Group used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data on State Parks' nonprofit partners.

RESEARCH COMPONENTS

- *Survey to all nonprofit organizations with an active, formal partnership agreement with State Parks (52 responses of 113 total organizations, a 46% response rate).*
- *Recent IRS 990 tax data of cooperating associations only (FY2016–2020), provided by CALPA.*
- *Two focus groups: one with representative State Parks field staff, and another with leaders of nonprofit partners representing different sizes, districts, partnership types, and organizational history.*
- *Case studies of nonprofit partnerships within the State Parks system and examples of park partnership outside this system identifying best practices.*
- *Interviews with individual nonprofit leaders and State Parks field staff to inform and refine findings and conclusions.*

Combining data from these sources, Potrero Group identified recurring themes across research components to characterize the field of nonprofit partnership, examine enablers of successes and current challenges, and identify trends affecting nonprofit partnerships.

The study concludes with recommendations informed by findings, key stakeholders, and Potrero Group's experience in the field of public-private partnership. These recommendations are intended to support nonprofit partnerships but may have broader applications across the many partnerships and potential partnership opportunities that contribute to a thriving State Park system.



Partner Highlight:

ANZA-BORREGO FOUNDATION

The Anza-Borrego Foundation is a cooperating association (authorized by PRC 513) supporting Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. In addition to providing educational programming, interpretive retail sales, and direct contributions to the park, a primary aspect of Anza-Borrego Foundation's mission is to conserve land by purchasing it from willing sellers and adding it to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Since 1967, ABF has acquired more than 54,000 acres of inholdings and other properties to add to the park.

Partner Highlight:

BIG BASIN RECOVERS FROM WILDFIRE WITH HELP OF PARTNERS

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Big Basin—the oldest California State Park and one of its most visited—was devastated by the CZU Lightning Complex Fire in August 2020, which burned 97% of the park (18,000 acres) and the iconic park visitors center, lodge, staff homes, and other buildings. Within two years, with the help of many partners, the iconic park partially reopened to the public on July 21, 2022.

The reopening was made possible by an extensive collaboration between State Parks, nonprofit organizations (Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, Save the Redwoods League, Parks California, Sempervirens Fund, and Mountain Parks Foundation), a “reimagining project” advisory committee, and a volunteer trail crew. Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, a nonprofit cooperating association that supports operations in 32 parks and beaches throughout the county, is operating visitor services such as the reservation system and interpretive programs at Big Basin during the recovery period.

THE VALUE PROPOSITIONS

of Nonprofit Partnerships

Park employees, nonprofit partners, and visitors alike support a well-funded state parks system. Voters have voiced their support for parks time and again, passing measures investing billions in California State Parks—starting with the first \$6 million bond for parkland acquisitions in 1927, which passed by a nearly three-to-one vote, and most recently approving Prop 68 in 2018, authorizing \$4 billion for state and local parks, environmental protection and restoration projects, water infrastructure projects, and flood protection projects.

Californians care deeply about their natural and cultural resources and are willing to dedicate public resources toward their protection and stewardship. It is also true that state parks exist within a complex ecosystem of connected landscapes, communities, and users with overlapping interests. While the state retains ultimate responsibility for its parks, there are many ways nonprofit partners provide immense value to the state park system and constituents, even when (and perhaps especially when) parks personnel, operations, and maintenance are fully staffed and resourced. When partners and park units are closely aligned on shared goals and priorities, the benefits and impact from partnership can be immense, including:

1. Leveraging public funding with private investment to enhance visitor experience.

Where partnerships are healthy and successful, peer-to-peer partnerships thrive between park staff and partner staff at many levels, with regular, systematic goal setting and communication built from a shared vision for success. With strong alignment, nonprofit partners can leverage relationships, resources, and expertise to help fulfill public priorities to a high standard, generating a virtuous cycle of investment from both public and private sources. Nonprofits are not a substitute for public funding sources. Some fear that nonprofit partnerships lead to privatization and de-funding. In fact, the leverage nonprofits bring to park projects through philanthropic support in the form of grants, corporate sponsorship, and donations should encourage greater public investment because these invested dollars can go much further.

2. Broadening opportunities for local community members to connect with and invest in ongoing relationships with parks.

When led by partners who are closely mission-aligned, nonprofits foster relationships in local communities that help build, maintain, and refresh the public's support for parks. While



Humboldt Redwoods State Park
Photo: California State Parks

State Parks has its own channels for onboarding docents and volunteers, nonprofit groups create additional bridges between community members and parks, especially among those communities who may not be reached otherwise. These relationships can increase access and help build strongly invested, diverse constituent support for parks and natural resources. Nonprofits play community-liaison roles in different contexts, and they almost always further connections in ways that expand and amplify the parks' own outreach. Additionally, nonprofit partners offer opportunities to keep community members engaged in public lands on an ongoing basis through membership, volunteerism, events, programs, and/or co-programming with other community organizations (see "LA River State Park Partners," p. 21).

3. Bringing specialized expertise to park projects and programs that increase access.

Parks are a public resource that everyone should have access to and enjoy. However, with so many potential park users with varying interests and needs, it is impractical for any one entity to become skilled at serving them all. Nonprofit partners can expand parks' services to help reach and serve more audiences. Examples range from translating educational materials into additional languages and providing multilingual programming, offering excursions for park visitors with disabilities, or providing therapeutic volunteer opportunities. Partners with specialized offerings such as these often serve more than one public lands agency or district, thus leveraging resources effectively.

4. Catalyzing innovation by introducing new relationships, resources, and programs to parks and park systems at large.

State Parks has an appropriately conservative mission: to preserve and protect natural and cultural resources. But for public systems to remain relevant, they need to adapt to new circumstances as well as constituents' changing needs over time—this is an area where nonprofit partnerships provide invaluable balance to the State Parks system. Novel programs, projects, and relationships introduced by nonprofit partners can scale and spread, helping to update park offerings and catalyze positive change in unexpected ways. Sometimes opportunities arising through nonprofit partnership lead to innovation in other areas of the park system, far from the location where initial contact was made. One example in the Santa Cruz District demonstrates how a pilot archeology education program led to an effort to digitize wildfire damage that is speeding recovery across the state (see “Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, Codifi, and Wildfire Recovery,” p. 27).

5. Closing time-sensitive deals on behalf of the state when timing would limit opportunities.

When mission-furthering opportunities arise, nonprofits that are closely aligned with their partners can act quickly with the buy-in of park leadership to secure resources, develop proposals, and make commitments. Land transactions are a typical example, where the nonprofit secures a critical piece of wildlife corridor, watershed, or cultural resource to be later incorporated into the park system (See “Anza-Borrego Foundation,” p.14). Other opportunities can arise, too, including timely interpretation or landmark celebrations. In these cases, nonprofits working in close concert with their partners can provide extra resources and flexibility to seize opportunities and/or produce competitive bids, using nonprofit authorities in partnership with government authorities to accomplish more together than either could separately.





Study of One Tam Furthers Our Understanding of Partnerships

One of the shining examples of partnership to enhance parks is the One Tam initiative, which works to coordinate activity among five agencies (California State Parks, National Park Service, Marin County Parks, the Marin Municipal Water District, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy), stewarding the stunning landscape of the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed. Initiated by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy in 2014, the One Tam initiative brings partners together to develop a common vision for stewardship and impact across agency boundaries. Since the founding of One Tam, the initiative has won wide praise for its work in landscape-scale inventory and monitoring, restoration, education, and community engagement.

In order to better understand the success of the initiative, Amy Mickel, Ph.D. and Leigh Goldberg researched the partnership. Their full report, *Generating, Scaling Up, and Sustaining Partnership Impact: One Tam's First Four Years*, identified three broad categories of impacts from partnership:

- ✓ **Foundational impacts:** connectivity and trust building
- ✓ **Operational impacts:** creativity, resource sharing, capacity growth, and partner culture
- ✓ **Outcome impacts:** efficiency, scale, resilience, collaborative culture building, and expanded connectivity

Mickel and Goldberg's findings tell a story of how partnerships not only provide strength in numbers, but create long-term changes in the people, institutions, and communities that participate in them. Working with multiple stakeholders that have potentially conflicting interests can push leaders to establish a clear understanding of the desired destination before any worthwhile or lasting change can be achieved. Likewise, trusting that others will provide necessary resources can bolster one's own ability to cope with what is asked of them.

ADDITIONAL PARTNERSHIP RESOURCES FOR LEADERS

- ✓ *21 Partnership Success Factors* by Brian O'Neill
- ✓ *Best Practices: Establishing a Partnership Model for America's Public Lands* by Public Lands Alliance

6. Convening common interests toward large goals with many stakeholders.

Increasingly, nonprofits play important roles as conveners of multi-stakeholder initiatives to conserve and manage landscapes across agencies, address park access disparities, measure environmental education and outreach impacts, create “healthy parks, healthy people” programs, and more. Especially when cooperation is needed between various local, state, and/or federal government agencies and departments, nonprofits can support coordination and contracting efficiencies while remaining neutral facilitators. They can also staff and fundraise for overall coordination and support, providing resources to the project that make less

sense for any one public agency or department to provide (see “Redwoods Rising,” p. 23).

7. Inviting important perspectives from marginalized stakeholders.

Particularly where communities have been systemically excluded from conservation, historic preservation and story-shaping, nonprofits can be critical partners to reestablish marginalized communities' connections to place, correct misleading interpretation, and foster healing (importantly, government-to-government partnerships with Tribal Nations are also increasingly filling this role, such as State Parks' co-management agreement with the Yurok at Big Stone Lagoon in North Redwoods District and others).

8. Contributing to resilience in times of crisis.

Wildfires, pandemics, budget crises, and climate threats—these unavoidable emergencies have disrupted business as usual and it is impossible to predict when they will strike again. An established, collaborative relationship with a nonprofit partner provides park managers with a trusted ally who can help them address crises in creative ways. The more flexibility nonprofit partners have to assist with damage assessment, restoration efforts, and operations—especially when resources are scarce—the quicker parks have been able to return to their core mission of protecting natural and cultural resources and providing public access (see “Big Basin Recovers from Wildfire with Help of Partners,” p. 15).

9. Encouraging public participation in issues affecting parks.

Most nonprofit partners are not advocacy organizations, but they can alert their constituents to issues and planned projects affecting parks and encourage them to make their voices heard in democratic processes. Sometimes, partners can engage the public in ways that would be inappropriate for the agency to do itself.

10. Boosting workforce development, skills building, confidence, and morale.

Successful collaborations can have a surprising outcome: they promote professional development, increase personal effectiveness, and enhance the resilience of the individuals involved. A study of the impacts of the multi-stakeholder partnership One Tam tells the story of how partnerships not only provide “strength in numbers” but create long-term changes in the people, institutions, and communities that participate in them (see “Study of One Tam Furthers Our Understanding of Partnerships,” p. 19).





Partner Highlight:

LA RIVER STATE PARK PARTNERS

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In the heart of Los Angeles, 35 grassroots organizations of various backgrounds joined in 1999 to form the Chinatown Yard Alliance, warding off a warehouse project that would have desolated the culturally rich area that is now Los Angeles State Historic Park. Founded after the property was transferred to California State Parks in 2001, cooperating association LA River State Park Partners (LARSP) continues the legacy of this collaborative, community-driven effort to preserve the three state park sites along the Los Angeles River. Los Angeles is a prime location for real estate development and is highly susceptible to gentrification. Balancing a complex network of community organizations, city, and State Parks interests, LARSP serves a critical role to ensure that the redevelopment of its green spaces benefits adjacent residents and provides opportunities to experience campfires and outdoor life just steps outside their homes.

LARSP board members have been particularly successful at advocating for public resources on behalf of the park. Its grassroots organizing in coordination with Indigenous groups and residents captured the California State Senate's attention, attracting \$5 million in public funding to sustain park operations and programming, which it has matched with millions in philanthropic funds. LARSP also supports cross-cultural programming at its parks, supporting over a dozen community partners to run interpretive, wellness, and cultural programs on its behalf, and helps attract large-scale events that bring additional revenues to State Parks.

LEARNING FROM OTHER PARK SYSTEMS

Friends of Manzanar: When a Project Starts a Conversation

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Manzanar, a former Japanese internment camp from World War II, became a National Historic Site in 1992. Friends of Manzanar, a nonprofit partner, was founded in 2004 to support projects, programming, and outreach to generate further public awareness about the site. The Friends' first project with the National Park Service (NPS) was to rebuild the camp's historic guard tower. A misconception and misinterpretation at the site was that Manzanar's guards were focused outward to protect internees within, but former internees confirm that the guards' guns faced inward at the internees themselves. By collaborating with NPS to recreate and reinterpret this historic structure, Friends of Manzanar brought a crucial piece of history into daylight.

This single initial project created a focal point for the public that raised broader awareness about the park and its history of Japanese internment, starting conversations that led to increased public awareness about Japanese Americans' experiences and inspiring further research and books on the history of Manzanar. Most importantly, the project marked the beginning of an effort to reinterpret the park from the point of view of those Americans who were interned there. Having strong reach into their communities, nonprofit partners such as Friends of Manzanar can increase citizens' engagement in the stories, needs, and everchanging contexts affecting California's parks—public engagement that is pivotal to keeping our public lands relevant.





Partner Highlight:

REDWOODS RISING: COORDINATING MULTI- AGENCY RESTORATION EFFORTS

To support Redwoods Rising—a multi-agency initiative to restore redwood forest ecosystems—nonprofit partner Save the Redwoods League, California State Parks, and the National Park Service crafted innovative permitting agreements that allow for multi-phase, multi-year collaboration, rather than a more traditional piecemeal project-by-project approach. This has created a broad platform for their 70,000 acres of shared restoration work, protecting against future delays and helping to attract multi-year donations and funds supporting ambitious projects. After clarifying shared goals and delineating roles and responsibilities, the three organizations signed an MOU in 2018 and completed their novel permitting structure in 2020.

Save the Redwoods League's permits with both State Parks and NPS allows the nonprofit to act as the central project manager and pay out funds to hired subcontractors. Despite challenges and restrictions during the pandemic, Save the Redwoods League has successfully coordinated the Greater Mill Creek and Greater Prairie restoration projects for the third consecutive year, added dedicated project management staff, and are looking for ways to support the collaboration in the long term with ongoing resources.

PARTNERS IN PROFILE:

Nonprofit Partnership Authorities

Authorities in the California Public Resource Code (PRC) allow State Parks to enter into agreements with other entities (public entities, private concessioners, and nonprofits) for a variety of purposes in support of State Parks' mission. The descriptions below summarize the **nonprofit partnership agreements** currently authorized by PRC.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT TYPES

COOPERATING ASSOCIATIONS

Cooperating associations are nonprofit charitable organizations supporting the interpretive and educational activities of one or more park units, authorized by PRC 513. Their primary purpose is to help provide interpretive and educational services that would not otherwise be available. Cooperating associations offer a range of resources to state parks (including staff and volunteers), raise money, seek grants, attract cash donations and in-kind contributions of goods and services, and sell memberships. They are also authorized to provide educational and interpretive merchandise to specific California State Parks units to sell in park visitor information facilities, and they can receive operating revenue from these sales.

The park's superintendent is responsible for monitoring and overseeing cooperating association activities as they relate to Department policy and how they affect state park interpretive operations and public image. All cooperating association activities are completed pursuant to the mutually agreed terms of a written contract with State Parks. Each cooperating as-

sociation has a cooperating association liaison (CAL) appointed by the district superintendent to represent State Parks to the association. The cooperating association board also appoints a person to be their cooperating association spokesperson to California State Parks, typically the president of the board or the executive director.

DONOR AGREEMENTS & PROUD PARTNERS

Donor agreements and "Proud Partners" (program partnerships) are authorized by PRC sections 5009.1, 5009.2, and 5009.3, allowing an interested party to donate funds or in-kind services to State Parks to continue some or all of the functions of a park program or project. Funding for these agreements can either be through a lump sum or a dedicated revenue stream.

CO-MANAGERS AND PARK OPERATORS

Through agreements authorized by PRC section 5080.42, DPR partners with a variety of nonprofits to manage and/or operate entire parks or functions within park unit(s). Co-management and operating agreements may involve the development, improvement, resto-

ration, care, maintenance, administration, or operation of a unit or units, or portion of a unit, of the state park system. Some park operators and co-managers also have cooperating agreements, providing interpretive and educational support and/or retail partnership under multiple agreements.

To the extent that nonprofits may operate the entirety of a state park unit, “that agreement may be entered into pursuant to this section only to the extent that the agreement would enable the department to avoid closure of a unit or units of the state park system that may otherwise be subject to closure. The department may only enter into an operating agreement that involves the operation of the entirety of a park unit for no more than 20 park units.”

SPECIALLY LEGISLATED NONPROFIT OPERATING PARTNERS

State Parks has three operating partners enabled by special legislation created prior to PRC section 5080.42. These include the Marconi Conference Center (PRC 5080.38), Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation (PRC 5080.36), and Cal Citrus State Historic Park Nonprofit Management Corporation (PRC 5007.4). These nonprofits were created to help manage resources and operations that are farther afield from State Parks’ core areas of expertise, such as hospitality and agriculture.

STATUTORY PARTNERSHIP

A recent innovation in the California State Parks system is the creation of Parks California, State Parks’ statutory partner, enabled by PRC 521, to “to develop and secure expertise, services, resources, and projects that are not readily available to the state park system” for a wide range of purposes, all related to fulfilling State Parks’

mission. Pursuant to PRC 523, Parks California and State Parks outline priorities and joint projects in an annual MOU. Through this partnership, State Parks has added to its resiliency, increased its capacity to provide statewide interpretive and education projects, and leveraged Parks California’s network to elevate untold stories in its parks.

POLICIES & PRACTICES

ANNUAL REPORTING TO STATE PARKS

Cooperating associations as well as co-management and operating partnerships are supported and structured by an annual reporting process (DPR 973 Annual Report Form). In this report, partners and their CALs document financial contributions and expenditures, describe which priorities from the previous year were accomplished, and articulate priorities for the coming year. The Annual Report is organized into the following components:

- *Part 1: Financial*
- *Part 2: Programs*
- *Part 3: Organizational Health*
- *Part 4: Annual Planning*
- *Part 5: Legal Compliance*

BIANNUAL REPORTING TO THE LEGISLATURE (CO-MANAGERS AND OPERATORS ONLY)

Additionally, in compliance with PRC 5080.42, the Partnerships Division provides biannual reports to the legislature on co-managing and operating partners. This report serves as State Parks’ notification regarding the status of its agreements with nonprofit organizations to operate or co-manage park units on its behalf.

Partner Highlight:

JACK LONDON PARK PARTNERS

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Jack London Park Partners was the first nonprofit organization authorized by PRC 5080.42 to operate a state park on behalf of the people of California. The organization invests considerable time and resources training 280 community volunteers, which has greatly increased gift shop and visitor center hours and the availability of docents to engage with visitors. Its extensive volunteer program not only sets up the organization for operational success but fosters a strong, cohesive network of constituents who are invested in the legacy and lively operation of the park.

Jack London Park Partners has become successful at navigating its operating partnership by following State Parks' lead. It closely communicates with the District Superintendent and field staff to achieve common goals and leverage each other's strengths to accomplish the park's objectives. Acknowledging the weight of responsibilities State Parks owns, Jack London Park Partners proactively asks, "What can we take off your plate?" Having built a strong relationship with State Parks over the past decade by rigorously aligning its efforts with the vision and mission of the district as well as demonstrating the invaluable capacities partner staff and volunteers bring, Jack London Park Partners is now trusted to go above and beyond its basic roles when called to do so.



Jack London State Historic Park
Photo: Jody Davies



Partner Highlight:

FRIENDS OF SANTA CRUZ STATE PARKS

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) is a cooperating association (PRC 531) founded in 1976. The organization also holds a more recent co-management agreement under PRC section 5080.42. The long-running success of its partnership with State Parks can be attributed to its many structural supports: Friends of Santa Cruz's State Parks cooperating association liaison (CAL) serves on the organization's board of directors, and the deputy superintendent of the district serves on the board's finance committee. An advisory committee comprising park staff, Friends staff, board members, and community members informs the direction of the organization. The partners also hold a regular monthly meeting of Friends staff and park staff to further support peer-to-peer working relationships. While the organization has experienced changes in executive directors and park superintendents over the years, these overlapping structures have helped its strong partnership culture remain the same.

The novel programs, projects, and relationships that longstanding nonprofit partners like Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks introduce to the State Parks system can generate unexpected opportunities with outsized impact. Recently, when Friends partnered with the company Codifi to give college students firsthand training documenting and digitizing cultural resources on park property, the relationship led to further conversations between Codifi and State Parks about other applications for the technology. State Parks ended up working with Codifi to evaluate wildfire damage in other park units across the state. Codifi's expertise and resources greatly accelerated State Parks' ability to document and take action on wildfire restoration—all because Friends introduced Codifi into State Parks' network.

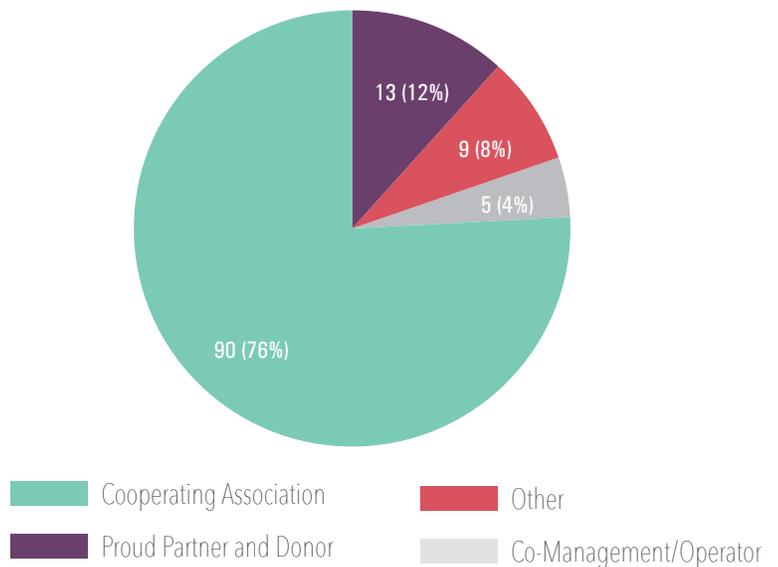
Big Basin Redwoods State Park
Photo: Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

PARTNERS IN PROFILE:

Summary Data of Nonprofit Partners

This study is focused on nonprofit partners to California State Parks with a formal partnership agreement. At the time of this study, the California State Parks Partnership Division reported 117 formal agreements with 111 nonprofit organizations. The majority of these are cooperating agreements (90 organizations, 76% of all partners), though State Parks works with a significant number of nonprofits (27) under other agreements.

Figure 1. Nonprofit Partners by Agreement Type



These organizations vary by size, organizational age, and complexity. Summarized survey data below provides a snapshot of these organizations. Of the 113 nonprofit partners identified, 52 organizations completed the survey (a 46% response rate). Additional survey findings are available in Appendix C (p. 53).

Figure 2. Nonprofit Organizations in Summary (Survey Data)

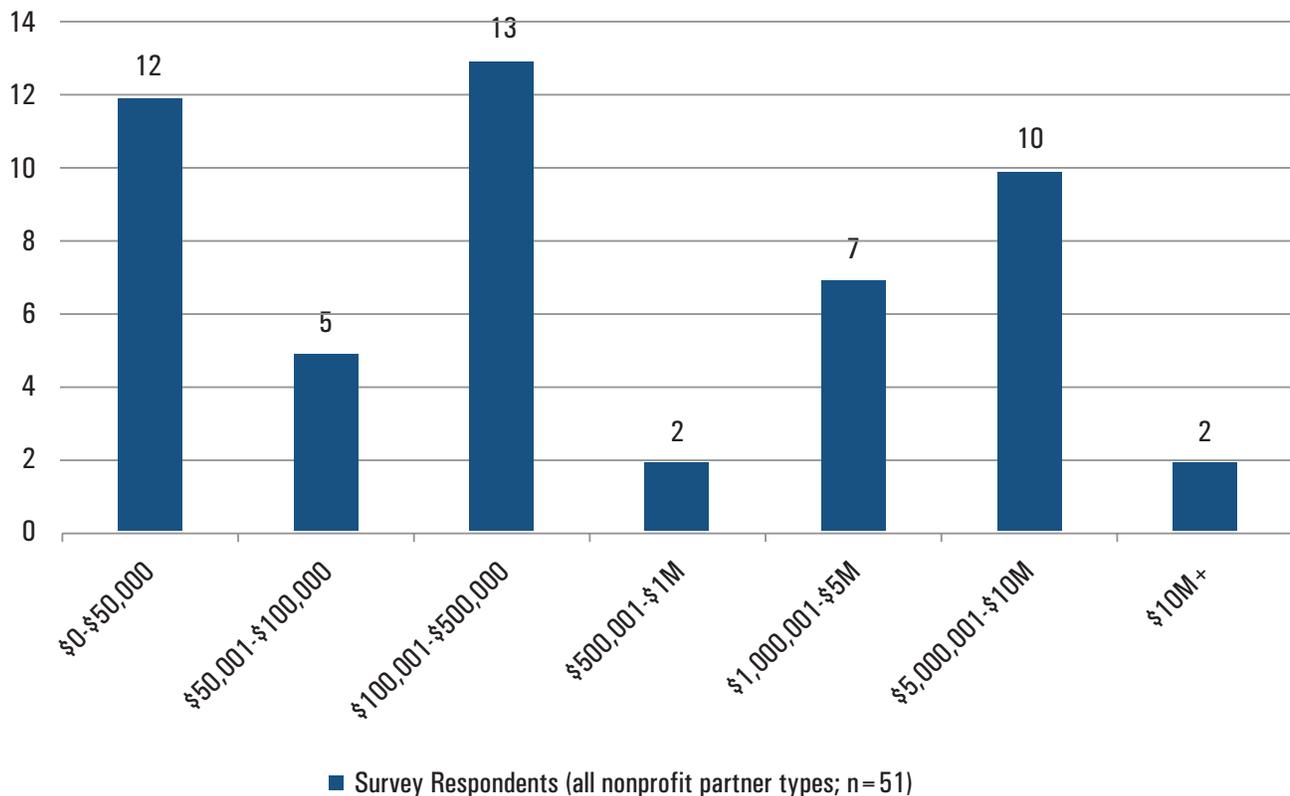
	AVERAGE	MEDIAN
Age of Organization	38 years	40 years
Operating Size	N/A	\$100,001-\$500,000
Organizations with CEO/Executive Director	56%	N/A
Years CEO/ED Has Served	5.6 years	4 years
Board Members per Organization	10.3	9
Employees	10.6 FTE	2 FTE
Active Volunteers	96.8	80

The median age of nonprofit partner organizations is 40 years, representing a period of growth in the sector in the 1970s and 1980s when many cooperating associations were founded. A little over half of nonprofits surveyed employ an executive director or CEO (56%). The other 44% are run by an all-volunteer board of directors. These nonprofits bring significant volunteer support to parks on top of State Parks' own programs; each organization supports a median of 80 active volunteers, with some supporting as many as 275 volunteers each year.

The distribution of survey respondents by size tracked closely with the number of organizations with available 990 data (see "Spotlight on Cooperating Associations," p. 32). Most organizations have annual budgets of more than \$100,000—a threshold that tends to mark an organization's ability to support paid staff, providing significant added capacity to the park and stability to the organization (noted in Figure 2 above, the median of nonprofits surveyed support two full-time employees). There are several organizations with budgets less than \$50,000 per year. We know less about these volunteer-run organizations as they are not required to file IRS form 990s. These smaller partners often operate in remote locations, creating essential community connection and added services that may not otherwise be available to these parks.

Figure 3. Survey Respondents by Size of Organization

Survey Question: What is your organization's typical operating (non-capital) budget (average past five years)?



NONPROFIT PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

Nonprofit partners can make direct cash contributions to state parks, but they also contribute in-kind staff and volunteer support as well as programmatic support that helps fulfill and amplify the California State Parks mission (e.g., interpretation, education, and park access). In some cases, nonprofits provide visitor services and interpretive retail where State Parks could not otherwise staff and support them. While State Parks staff are critical to planning and maintaining alignment with the parks' mission, there is always room to broaden, expand, and reach more visitors with help from mission-aligned partners. Survey data below describes the activities nonprofits provide that contribute value to state parks.

Figure 4. Nonprofit Partner Programs and Activities

Survey Question: Does your organization engage in any of the following programs or activities?

ACTIVITY	# OF ORGANIZATIONS	% OF ORGANIZATIONS
Retail sales	40	78%
Other educational or interpretive programs	38	75%
Produce park informational/collateral materials	37	73%
Staff- or docent-led tours	31	61%
Volunteer programs	30	59%
Self-guided tours or exhibits	27	53%
Staff information or visitor centers	26	51%
Transportation for schools or other groups	24	47%
Maintenance of trails, buildings, or other facilities	22	43%
Fee programs such as lectures, classes, tours, or performances	20	39%
Cultural or historic resource management/preservation	19	37%
Natural resource management	17	33%

Formal multi-stakeholder partnership engagements	15	29%
Other	14	27%
Support PORTS videocasts	13	25%
Manage facilities rentals for weddings and events	9	18%
Manage fee collection for park entry	9	18%

In addition to programmatic contributions, nonprofit partners bring **diverse strengths and expertise** to their partnerships. In survey responses, partners described wide-ranging strengths and skillsets, including:

- *Dedicated volunteers*
- *Loyal membership*
- *Passionate, skilled staff*
- *Engaged and effective board members*
- *High public and community group engagement*
- *Agility, flexibility, and innovation*
- *Institutional knowledge and experience*
- *Financial stability and support*
- *Ability to collaborate on long-term projects*
- *Adaptability under duress and adversity*
- *Development of quality interpretation and education materials*
- *Promotion of environmental justice*
- *Land transactions that have significantly grown the State Parks system*

Finally, nonprofit partners create added capacity for fulfilling State Parks' mission. Particularly in recent, difficult years when wildfires and a global pandemic slowed or stopped many regular activities, nonprofit partners described many **recent successes** working in close cooperation with field staff, including:

- *Needed restoration and infrastructure projects*
- *Trail expansions*
- *Native plantings*
- *Ability to retain volunteers and docents and to continue programs during difficult times*

- *Expanded education programs and interpretive materials*
- *Investments to improve interpretive retail and other revenue generating activities*
- *Increased fundraising and membership*
- *Taking advantage of irregular pandemic circumstances to find new ways to serve visitors*
- *Improved communications with park staff and new processes to make their partnerships more effective*
- *Emergency responsiveness such as multi-year fire recovery and providing emergency support and resources to address COVID needs*

It is important to note that many of State Parks' formal partnership agreements bring even further support to parks through their own community partnerships and re-granting programs, making the number of nonprofits supporting state parks much larger than just the 111 organizations within the scope of this study. Partners such as Parks California, California State Parks Foundation, Save the Redwoods League, and others provide their own grants to partners in the field (e.g., outdoor educators and other service providers). Further studies could shed light on the true number of nonprofits supporting state parks and their impacts, as well as best practices to steward this wider network of support.



Spotlight on Cooperating Associations

Cooperating associations comprise a large majority of nonprofit partners. They are the state parks' primary model for nonprofit partnership and have played an integral role in park operations for decades. The California League of Park Associations (CALPA), the primary membership association supporting these partners, has collected and compiled recent IRS form 990 data (FY2016–2020) in support of this study.

To account for recent disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as year-to-year fluctuations typical in nonprofit accounting (e.g., apparent swings in income and/or expenses due to receipt of multi-year grants or donations toward capital projects), multi-year averages were used. Years of available data varied; in some cases organizations had filed form 990s for all five years (2016–2020), in other cases only some years' financials were available. All available years for each organization were averaged.

The figure below characterizes the financials of cooperating associations. A small number of large organizations skew mean averages; the median provides a profile of most typical organizations. While the larger partners created enviable impact, the invaluable nonmonetary contributions made by small, often all-volunteer organizations should not be discounted. These smaller organizational partners, sometimes working in very remote and underserved areas of the state, are essential to the functioning of many park units—often providing visitor services that would otherwise not be available. Their smaller budgets make them vulnerable to the ups and downs of economic cycles.



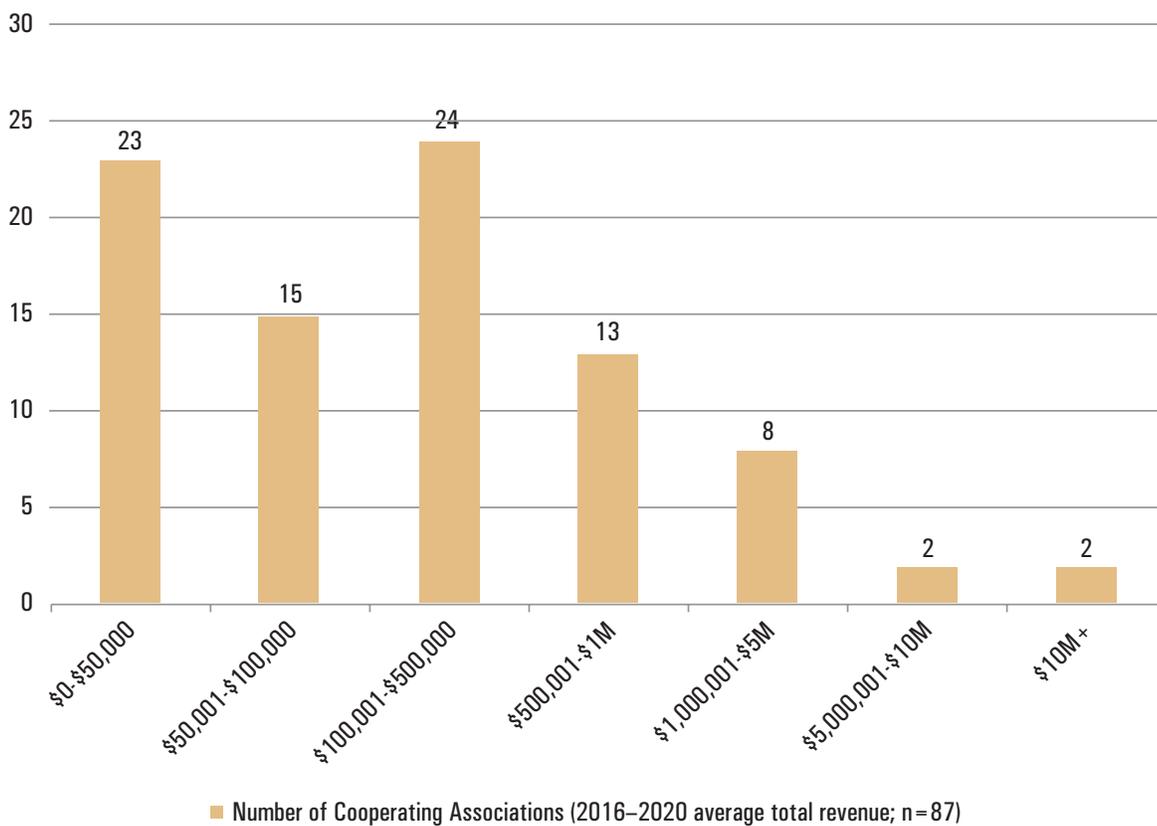
Spotlight on Cooperating Associations

Figure 5. Cooperating Associations Financials and Contributions (multi-year average of available IRS form 990 data)

	AVERAGE	MEDIAN	TOTALS
Annual Total Expenses	\$1,464,582	\$101,163	\$111,308,217
Annual Total Revenue	\$1,679,530	\$134,845	\$129,323,802
Annual Total Contributions to Each Organization	\$895,799	\$62,716	\$66,289,140
Annual Total Contributions to California State Parks	\$179,554	\$22,069	\$15,621,172

The distribution of cooperating associations by size was comparable to the respondents to the survey of all nonprofit partners. This comparison gave us confidence that the survey (response rate 46%) was representative of the larger field of nonprofit partners.

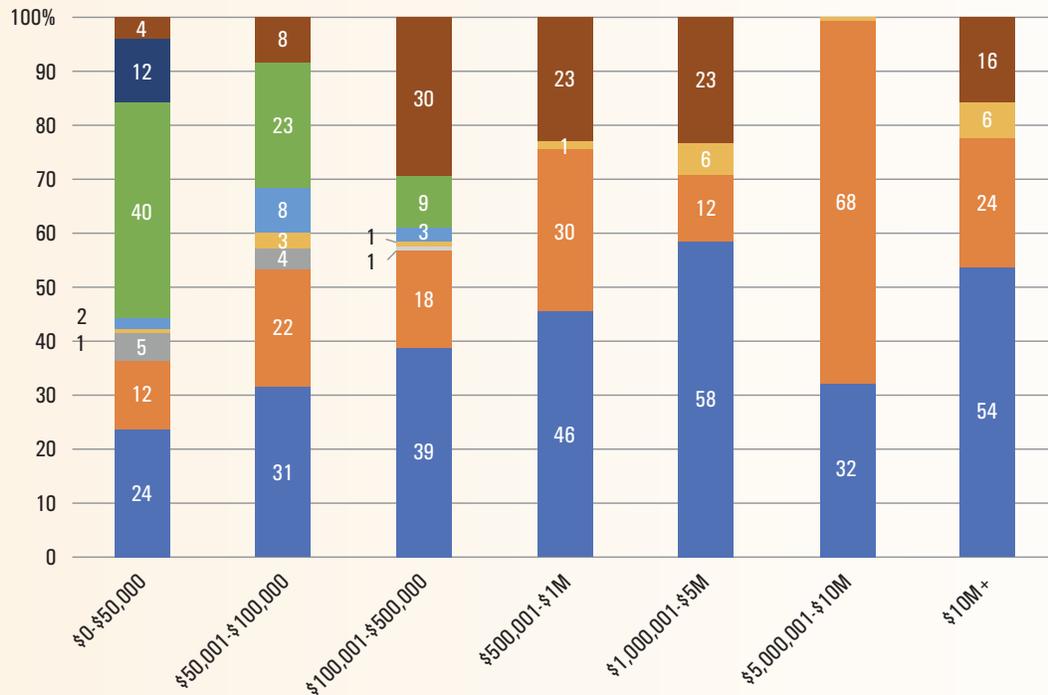
Figure 6. Cooperating Associations by Size (Average Revenue 2016–2020)



The data show differences between smaller and larger organizations. For example, the smaller organizations are more dependent on retail sales. This means smaller organizations may be most affected by emergency park closures caused by wildfires, pandemic, and/or government shutdown, and possibly more vulnerable to other turns in the economy.

It should be noted that cooperating associations add immense contributions (e.g., volunteer service, stewardship, and advocacy) not captured in the financial information.

Figure 7. Revenue Source Percentage for Cooperating Associations by Size (multi-year average of available IRS 990 data)”



990 Category Definitions

- **Contributions:** gifts, grants, and similar amounts received
- **Program:** service revenue including government fees and contracts
- **Membership:** dues and assessments received from the public
- **Investment:** income such as dividends, rents, and similar receipts
- **Fundraising:** money raised from events such as dinner, dances, concerts, etc.
- **Retail Sales:** sale of goods directly to the public
- **Sale of Assets:** sale of resources of value such as property or equipment
- **Other:** income that does not fall under the above categories

Mature organizations also appear to be specializing, rather than diversifying their revenue sources. This may be counterintuitive for smaller organizations, suggesting that the path forward for organizational growth may not be *how else can we contribute and grow?* but rather, *where should we focus?* The finding also suggests that organizations put more emphasis on donor cultivation as they mature, a trend that is consistent across nonprofits broadly.

STUDY FINDINGS:

Key Themes

Combining findings across all research methods including individual interviews, focus groups with park staff and with nonprofit leaders, and a survey of nonprofit organizations, the following themes emerged.” to “revealed the following themes. These findings are organized under three concepts: **enablers of successful partnership**, **current circumstances affecting success**, and **the path ahead for partnerships**.

ENABLERS OF SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

1. For partnerships to be successful, their value and purpose must be articulated, understood, and embraced at all levels by State Parks and at the nonprofit.

Partnerships take considerable time and resources to build and maintain, but the value they create for park systems is returned many times over. Despite the investment it takes to make them successful, when the purpose and desired outcomes of nonprofit partnerships are unclear or misunderstood, their value can be minimized. Currently, nonprofit partnerships are embraced unevenly around the state. To fully unlock the potential of partnerships as put forward by the Parks Forward Commission, a considerable communication effort is needed to create more awareness throughout State Parks’ districts and headquarters. Partners’ boards should support a shared understanding of success and desired outcomes that is grounded in the needs and capacity of a given district as well as State Parks’ mission.

2. Communication and peer-to-peer collaboration are the foundation of successful partnerships.

Frequent communication and co-planning processes support the level of alignment necessary for partnerships to achieve their full potential. Across research methods, Potrero Group asked partners and park staff to describe when their partnerships were most successful. Nearly every response named frequent communication and described a trusting, collaborative relationship where park and partner work side by side to develop plans and solve problems. The most effective partnerships support collaboration structurally by holding frequent, recurring check-ins and planning sessions, having park leadership participate in board meetings, facilitating regular crossover between field staff and their nonprofit counterparts, and sometimes even co-locating offices. One nonprofit leader reported, “We have a ‘no surprises’ policy.” From a district superintendent: “I communicate with my nonprofit partners as though they are members of my core management staff—they are copied on all the same emails. It doesn’t serve us to have our partners representing us to the public without being on the same page.”

3. Partnerships require strong alignment toward shared goals that prioritize State Parks' mission, supported by a culture that recognizes partners' contributions as well as their constraints.

Partnerships function best when partners embrace each other's constraints as their own, with an attitude of *how will we get this done together, given the circumstances? versus we can't do anything about this until something changes on your end.* An understanding of each other's needs and constraints is critical—compliance issues at the state level, for example, or the quirks of nonprofit accounting. Such understanding is usually built over time through frequent communication and on-the-ground collaboration.

Where partnership was most challenging, survey data, interviews, and focus groups revealed a disconnect between nonprofit leaders and their State Parks counterparts about the perceived purpose of partnership and the value nonprofits provide the State Parks system. There is a desire from some park staff that nonprofits simply provide the resources they ask for, whereas nonprofits seek collaborative partnerships that embrace shared problem solving and decision making. These desires need not be at odds. What is missing is a shared understanding of how these goals service each other.



We are constantly putting all the ideas from our staff and board through the filter of, does this serve our district's General Plan, does this help the park meet its goals?

Most donors and foundations are not in the business of supplementing public budgets; as fundraisers, nonprofits need to make a case for philanthropic support beyond financial need—what additional value will the partnership provide, and how will public resources be leveraged by the nonprofit to create added benefits for the proposed project or program? Making this case requires parks and their partners to be closely aligned on joint projects' goals and outcomes, to understand what each party brings to the partnership, to share public credit willingly, and show genuine enthusiasm for each other's contributions and accomplishments.

On the other hand, it can be the case that a nonprofit partner is proposing projects that are more driven by board member or donor interest than by the district or department's priorities. This can sour relationships and turn park staff and leadership off to partnering. As state park partners, nonprofit leaders need to demonstrate a service-first approach, working hand-in-glove to meet shared goals that are always in service of State Parks' mission. From a nonprofit leader: "We are constantly putting all the ideas from our staff and board through the filter of, does this serve our district's General Plan, does this help the park meet its goals?"



4. It can be beneficial for partner organizations to focus and specialize.

At the beginning of a partnership, nonprofits and park staff may approach their work together on a project-by-project basis, addressing pressing needs as they arise. Through repeated collaboration, however, it serves nonprofits and their park partners to begin to identify where the partners' greatest strengths and value-add lie and focus partnership efforts on those activities. It could be that the partner has had particular success attracting and retaining docents; maybe it has reliably fundraised for capital projects or added needed project management capacity; other partners may be able to sustain robust membership programs that generate unrestricted revenue by offering special perks to members that are specific to the parks' unique offerings. Focus group participants emphasized that concentrating resources and expertise can help developing organizations stabilize revenues and expenses and grow their operations strategically, rather than trying to build capacity and expertise in many areas at once—which can stall the organization in a phase of continuous experimentation. Cooperating associations' 990 data also appears to support specialization: larger organizations report fewer revenue sources than their smaller counterparts (Figure 6. Revenue Sources of Cooperating Associations by Size, p. 33).

Park leaders can support and encourage their partners' organizational development by recognizing strengths and providing feedback with an eye to the long-term success of the partnership. Though it can be tempting to ask partners to address a wide variety of needs, especially when needs are great, financial stability and organizational growth is what will ultimately expand the partners' and the parks' capacities over time.

CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING SUCCESS

5. Limited capacity is stressing partnerships and can lead to missed opportunities.

Partnerships require frequent communication and attention from leadership on both sides. For partnerships to flourish, many parks need added capacity at the field level to foster relationships and support collaboration. Park leaders and CALs are invested in seeing their nonprofit partners succeed, but many of them are juggling other partnerships, responsibilities, and competing priorities—and partners feel that strain, particularly when it limits communication. Uncertainty and shifting timelines due to capacity constraints can create challenges to nonprofits' planning processes, budgeting, and staff allocations, putting them in a difficult position with funders and board members, and

sometimes resulting in lost opportunities. Partners who are seeing persistent vacancies and turnover at their park wonder if there is any way they can assist State Parks in building capacity with workforce pipelines, as some partners are enabled to do for agencies like the National Park Service.

6. In many cases, the norms and working agreements between parks and their nonprofit partners need to be updated.

Due to disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic and wildfire closures, turnover in field roles or field staff capacity, and competing park priorities, there are many instances where annual planning and reporting processes have been disrupted or are not taking place. This is creating inconsistency—and confusion—when it comes to collaboration. There has been far less disruption where partnerships are fully in-



Calaveras Big Trees State Park
Photo: California State Parks

tegrated into management structures at the park and at the nonprofit (e.g., where park leadership serves on the partner's board of directors, or park and nonprofit staff maintain regular standing meetings, among other practices). In those instances where the partnership needs to be reset or refreshed, there is an opportunity for the governance structures, boundaries, guidelines, and expectations of partnership agreements to be updated in ways that establish more consistency and insulate the partnership from staff turnover and emergencies when they occur. The Partnerships Division is currently designing strategies to help field staff and their partners codify working relationships with training and other support.

It is worth noting that most nonprofit partnerships have been operating for decades: the median organizational age of State Parks' nonprofit partners is 38 years, and the mean age is 40 years. Partners' norms often pre-date newer efforts to refresh and reset partnerships, such

as the creation of the Partnerships Division and other Transformation Team efforts. In some cases, nonprofits feel a sense of ownership over the way things are done and it can feel like a loss when CALs and superintendents propose change. On the other hand, where turnover has been high, inconsistency in relationships has led to misalignment and miscommunication between partners. At the same time, new partnership models are emerging that do not fit in traditional cooperating association agreement models (e.g., multi-stakeholder partnerships such as landscape-scale conservation efforts, education, and/or equity and access projects). Parks and their partners are also experiencing delays executing agreements and commencing projects due to capacity issues. All these scenarios are creating opportunities for change as the Partnerships Division and Department revisit and update its partnership processes and agreements.

Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park
Photo: Parks California



THE PATH AHEAD FOR PARTNERSHIPS

7. There is a critical need for resilience across the California State Parks System.

Parks and nonprofits alike have been greatly affected by external stressors: wildfires and the pandemic have stretched resources, caused recurring closures, placed State Parks and nonprofits in “crisis mode,” affected parks’ and partners’ abilities to recruit and maintain talent, and put park resources at risk. At the same time, interest in outdoor recreation has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Many parks and their partners have been able to rise to these challenges, but the current need for resilient systems underscores the value of partnerships and the need to invest in them at the present moment.

8. This is a pivotal moment for partnerships.

Many changes have taken place at State Parks over the past decade, and at the same time, many nonprofit partners are revisiting their strategies after a period of drastic, unanticipated disruption. There is an opportunity to refocus partnerships, reestablish norms, promote better understanding of the value of partnerships across State Parks, and to provide more support and training for park staff and their nonprofit peers so that strong partnerships can foster resiliency across the State Parks system.

9. Partners are interested in better serving all Californians but fewer have taken steps to address diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Almost 75% of survey respondents “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that they have a clear understanding of their organization’s diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) needs and goals. However, only 37% of these organizations have undertaken a DEI plan or process. This could be a rich area for parks and their partners to collaborate toward shared goals, especially as State Parks partners, to administer AB 209’s Outdoor Equity Grants, for example.

10. Partnerships with California Native American tribes are developing and their unique context deserves its own attention.

There is excitement among park staff and partners alike about the rising number of partnerships with California Native American tribes to co-manage and support the access and use of ancestral lands and resources. A small number of State Parks’ tribal partnerships fall into the category of “nonprofit” because of their incorporation as land trusts, but these partnerships have more in common with governmental partnerships with California Native American tribes. There are lessons to be learned from current and emerging co-management efforts, and given the many opportunities to utilize tribal expertise and traditional knowledges to further conservation efforts in partnership with State Parks, these partnerships are likely to generate a unique set of findings and recommendations that deserve their own attention.

11. Multi-agency, landscape-level conservation is a rising trend, and nonprofit partners are likely to continue playing a crucial role facilitating these efforts.

The California Landscape Stewardship Network identifies 34 existing collaboratives across the state, many of which include California State Parks. This is presenting an opportunity for nonprofit partners, the Partnerships Division, and the Operations Division to have more practical crossover, support a growing need for cooperative management (both nonprofit and governmental), foster a growing network of relationships, and build a body of partnership knowledge together through shared experience, furthering statewide initiatives such as California's 30x30. Nonprofit partners are building expertise and raising funds to coordinate support for multi-agency conservation efforts. A growing collection of research and resources guiding best practice may aid further training for park staff and nonprofit partners alike (see "Spotlight on Landscape-Scale Conservation," below).



Spotlight on Landscape-Scale Conservation

The purpose of landscape stewardship is to meet landscape-level natural and cultural resource challenges by allowing agencies sharing borders to innovate operationally and share resources. Landscape-scale conservation promotes resiliency and stability against threats like climate change and wildfires, which cross jurisdictions. Representing federal, state, and local agencies, tribal partners, nonprofits, academic institutions, community organizations, and private land managers, these collaboratives break down silos and build relationships across organizations that amplify their collective power to address time-sensitive ecological challenges.

Landscape stewardship requires strong alignment among partners to enable actionable, productive processes and operations-level collaboration. In most cases, a single entity serves as a backbone facilitator to coordinate agendas, meetings, operations, resources, funding, and to measure progress toward shared outcomes. Nonprofit support organizations often serve this role well. They can fundraise under their 501(c)3 while adding capacity and coordination toward seeking public funds and grants. They can also take a neutral position and facilitate decision-making when priorities and/or processes across public lands management agencies differ.

In 2016, California Landscape Stewardship Network (CLSN) was founded by six regional collaboratives that recognized a need to establish best practices and share lessons learned, including how to fully unlock the potential of partnership to support natural resource management. Offering peer exchange, capacity building, leadership development, and technical expertise, the CLSN platform has grown to support 34 landscape collaboratives. Many of these include California State Park units, and the Department is quickly gaining expertise in this type of multi-stakeholder partnership.

Partner Highlight:

SIERRA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION

.....

The seeds for the creation of the Sierra State Parks Foundation began in 1968 when a group of citizens formed a committee in response to plans by the California Department of Parks and Beaches to demolish the Hellman-Ehrman Mansion and replace it with a lakeside campground. Through advocacy and collaboration with the State of California, the committee was able to protect one of the most spectacular historic estates on the shores of Lake Tahoe.

Since that time, Sierra State Parks Foundation has grown dramatically and now supports seven state parks in the Sierra District along the shores of Lake Tahoe and Donner Lake. In each of these parks, the Foundation has worked with donors and State Park partners to enhance the visitor experience by supporting visitor centers and interpretive displays, restoring site properties and artifacts, and creating educational opportunities. All of these efforts allow the Sierra State Parks Foundation to celebrate the heritage and scenic environment of our region with visitors from around the world.

Sierra State Parks Foundation shows the power of nonprofit partnership with State Parks. The organization operates four retail stores at park visitor centers. In addition, they manage the tour and visitor center operations at Vikingsholm (Emerald Bay State Park) and the Hellman-Ehrman Estate at Sugar Pine Point State Park. These sources of income enable the Foundation to cover operational costs and return funds to the State for program needs and historic site restoration.

Like many cooperating associations, their fundraising efforts are multi-fold: memberships, events, grants, and direct contributions for specific projects. The Sierra State Parks Foundation is a small and mighty force ensuring that the Lake Tahoe-Donner area California State Parks remain open and welcoming for all to experience.





Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, Photo: California State Parks

Partner Highlight:
FRIENDS OF ALLENSWORTH

.....

Friends of Allensworth is a smaller cooperating association run by dedicated volunteers focused on introducing Colonel Allensworth and the town of Allensworth, now known as Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, to a new generation. The organization’s focus is on building awareness and education regarding Allensworth and the importance of the contributions of African Americans to California.

Friends of Allensworth sponsors events to raise money for the interpretive program at the park. Docents are available, dressed in period clothing to educate visitors about the history of the park. Food, arts and craft vendors, education, tours and horse and buggy rides are also available during events. The organization provides experts well versed in Black history to deepen visitors’ understanding and add expanded context before and after Allensworth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nonprofit partnerships are key to achieving State Parks' ambitious conservation, equity, and access goals and increasing the system's resiliency during challenging times. To further this field and help nonprofit partnerships flourish, with support from the legislature, State Parks, its nonprofit partners, and statewide support organizations (such as Parks California, the California State Parks Foundation, or California League of Park Associations) could take the following actions.

1. Generate systemic support for partnership across divisions of State Parks and among other state-level stakeholders.

Many leaders within State Parks have integrated nonprofit partnerships as a critical park management resource, increasing their parks' resiliency and capacity to address complex needs. However, there are still districts and divisions where partnerships are less understood, and opportunities remain to support and develop nonprofit partnerships more systemically. To unlock the potential of partnerships to provide extraordinary experiences for the public, the Partnerships Division must continue to educate other leaders across State Parks on the value and appropriate roles for nonprofit partners (see *The Value Propositions of Nonprofit Partnership*, p. 16). Nonprofits can also help generate more awareness and support by articulating their value propositions to the governor's office, the legislature, and other state-level stakeholders as appropriate.

Addresses key findings:

i. There is a critical need for resilience across the California State Parks system.

ii. For partnerships to be successful, their value and purpose must be articulated, understood, and embraced at all levels by State Parks and by nonprofit partners.

2. Identify opportunities to interpret partner agreements more expansively and address barriers and constraints limiting timely execution of projects.

Constrained by limited staff resources, nonprofit partnership agreements can take significant time to review and execute—especially when these agreements fall outside of typical cooperating agreement boilerplate. This can put partners and their contributions in limbo, reducing their capacity to fundraise and/or to move projects forward. In some cases, partners need more education and support to craft agreements that more easily meet State Parks' legal standards. When staffing capacity at the district level is constraining the partnership, backstop processes supported by the Partnerships Division could help keep planned projects moving forward. There may also be opportunities to standardize scope of work terms for program partners and donors, and/or allow for

multi-year or multi-phase agreements that lessen the burden on both State Parks and its partners to renew agreements. For State Parks to deepen local resources through new, creative partnerships, these capacity and leadership issues must be addressed. As a next step, State Parks and nonprofit partners should identify the existing barriers to executing timely partnership agreements and partner with the state's legal team to creatively address these constraints systemically. As a best practice, parks and their partners should also look at ways to support their partnership structurally through board participation, advisory and/or working groups that combine park and nonprofit staff, and other management methods.

Addresses key findings:

- i. *In many cases, the norms and working agreements between parks and their nonprofit partners need to be updated.*

3. Expand opportunities for nonprofit partners to help State Parks recruit, hire, and retain employees with strong partnership skills.

In many districts, partnerships are currently constrained by State Parks' capacity, at times caused by understaffing, to support regular and frequent collaboration. Partners' networks could be valuable in recruiting strong talent with relevant experience and expertise. Adapting models from the National Park Service (e.g., Interagency Personal Act) and other public agencies, nonprofits working collaboratively with State Parks may be able to creatively address these critical staffing shortages and assist with recruiting a more diverse workforce, which is a State Parks priority. The State hiring

process can also be daunting to candidates—if authorized, partners may be able to help more prospective hires navigate this process.

Addresses key findings:

- i. *Personnel changes and vacancies are stressing partnerships and putting partner organizations at risk.*

4. Examine ways State Parks can expand its partnerships to reach more Californians.

Given State Parks' evolving needs—particularly goals to increase park access—there is an opportunity for State Parks and its partners to think creatively about how to address diversity, equity, and inclusion. The vast majority (76%) of State Parks' nonprofit partners are cooperating associations, critical partners with a long, established history. Working closely with State Parks, these longstanding partners could seek ways to re-envision their roles and develop new approaches to address equity and access. State Parks may also seek to partner creatively with community organizations, outdoor educators, and others to achieve common goals that fulfill State Parks' mission, and can encourage existing partners to pursue these relationships, too. For organizations with less experience working with state agencies, it can be intimidating to initiate such an agreement. With clear objectives and an understanding of the value these less traditional partners can provide, State Parks should consider building more bridges to community partners through programmatic (non-cooperating) agreements. Current partners could also provide a platform for onboarding new partnerships that bring added value.

Addresses key findings:

- i. There is a critical need for resilience across the California State Parks system.*
- ii. Partners are interested in better serving all Californians but fewer have taken steps to address diversity, equity, and inclusion.*
- iii. It can be beneficial for partner organizations to focus and specialize.*

5. Promote continuous learning and development on the value of partnership, enablers of success, and collaboration skills and processes among State Parks staff and partner staff.

Building skills and enthusiasm for partnership takes time and leadership—both of which must be supported, rewarded, and compensated. State Parks and its statewide partners need added capacity and budgeted positions to pro-

vide a variety of learning and development platforms, including workshops and educational sessions, dissemination of case studies and best practices, performance standards and metrics, mentoring and coaching programs, as well as network-building activities that increase trust and strengthen relationships among nonprofit partners and park staff. Learning opportunities co-hosted by both State Parks and one or more of its statewide partners that blend field staff and nonprofit staff are recommended for building better working relationships and cross-sector understanding.

Addresses key findings:

- i. Communication and peer-to-peer collaboration are the foundation of successful partnerships.*
- ii. Partnerships require strong alignment toward shared goals that prioritize State Parks' mission, supported by a culture that recognizes partners' contributions as well as their constraints.*

Mono Lake Tufa State Natural
Photo: Parks California



CONCLUSION

The California State Parks system embraces partnerships—not because the Department is incapable of managing its resources, but because the resources in its care require collaborative stewardship. No state park is a contained system; its lands and waterways face threats that extend beyond park borders, and its cultural and historical resources lose their value and relevance without an engaged public. As the Parks Forward Commission recognized, “State Parks cannot do it alone.” But partnership doesn’t mean taking a step back—rather, it is an effective way for State Parks to lead, enlisting diverse supporters in its vision, and inspiring other conservationists and stewards in California and beyond.

State Parks and its nonprofit partners are on an ambitious path to embrace landscape-level conservation, lead efforts on equity and access, rehabilitate aging infrastructure across the state, and enhance the visitor experience to a renewed degree of excellence. This study identifies many instances across the system where partnerships are leveraging critical resources to preserve and protect state resources. At the same time, partnerships are unevenly embraced across the state, and opportunities remain to fully realize partnerships’ potential. Recent, ongoing disruptions underscore the need for added resilience in our parks systems, from natural causes such as wildfires and species movement exacerbated by climate change, to cultural ones like shifting political winds, budget pressures, and social change. Disruptions are also presenting opportunities, and now is a prime moment to refocus and reset partnership norms.



Partnership doesn’t mean taking a step back—rather, it is an effective way for State Parks to demonstrate its leadership.

By furthering its commitment to nonprofit partnerships and elevating best practices, State Parks can increase its resilience, expand its capacity, and provide access to more Californians. This effort will require leadership, intention, and investment across the State Parks system. Leadership is required from many directions: the field, Sacramento headquarters, legislators, nonprofit partners, and other state agencies and departments with a stake in State Parks’ success. Intention means aligning stakeholders on the value and purpose of partnerships, the opportunities they present, desired outcomes, and committing to working in close collaboration with partners. Most importantly, partnerships take time—a limited resource and a significant investment. The day-to-day working relationships between superintendents and executive directors, field staff and nonprofit staff, and the Partnerships Division and other divisions within State Parks are the bedrock of functioning partnerships. Like all relationships, partnerships evolve over time and require renegotiation and re-commitment—in short, they are work. But when these working relationships are strong, California’s nonprofit partnerships produce results far greater than the sum of their parts.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS' NONPROFIT PARTNERS

At the time of this study, the California State Parks Partnership Division reported formal partnership agreements with 113 organizations, listed below.

Anderson Marsh Interpretive Association	Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association
Angel Island Conservancy	Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association
Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation	El Rio de Los Angeles Veterans Collaborative
Anza-Borrego Foundation	Fort Ross Conservancy
Benicia State Parks Association	Fort Tejon Historical Association
Bidwell Bar Association	Foundation for the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains
Bidwell Mansion Association	Four Rivers Natural History Association
Big Sur Historical Society	Friends 4 Picacho
Big Sur Natural History Association	Friends of Allensworth
Bodie Foundation	Friends of China Camp
Boosters of Old Town San Diego	Friends of Columbia State Historic Park
CA State Capitol Museum Volunteer Association	Friends of Folsom Powerhouse
CA State Historic Governor's Mansion Foundation, Inc.	Friends of Lakes Folsom and Natoma
CA State Railroad Museum Foundation, Inc.	Friends of Mt. Tam
California Citrus State Historic Park Non Profit Management Corp	Friends of Ocotillo Wells
Calaveras Big Trees Association	Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park
California Indian Heritage Center Foundation	Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges
California Outdoor Recreation Foundation	Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks
California State Parks Foundation	Friends of Sutter's Fort
Central Coast Lighthouse Keepers	Friends of the Antelope Valley Indian Museum
Central Coast State Parks Association	Friends of the Elephant Seal
Chaw'Se Indian Grinding Rock Association	Friends of Trione-Annadel State Park
Chino Hills State Park Interpretive Association	Gold Discovery Park Association
Clear Lake State Park Interpretive Association	Golden Gate National Park Conservancy
Clockshop	Hendy Woods Community
Coastside State Park Association	Hollister Hills Off-Road Association
Crystal Cove Conservancy	Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association
Crystal Cove State Lifeguard Association	Huntington State Beach Junior Lifeguard Association

Ide Adobe Interpretive Association
Irvine Ranch Conservancy
Jack London Park Partners
John Marsh Historic Trust
Literacy for Environmental Justice
Los Angeles River State Park Partners
Los Encinos Docent Association
Malibu Adamson House Foundation (Malibu Lagoon Museum)
Malibu Creek Docent Association
Marconi Conference Center Operating Corp.
Masons of California
McArthur-Burney Falls Interpretive Association
Mendocino Area Parks Association
Mendocino Woodlands Camp Association
Midtown Association
Mojave River Natural History Association
Monterey State Historic Park Association
Mount Diablo Interpretive Association
Mountain Parks Foundation
Mt. San Jacinto Natural History Association
Napa Valley State Parks Association
National Model Railroad Association
Oceano Lifeguard Association, Inc.
Parks California
Pine Ridge Association
Plaza History Association
Plumas-Eureka State Park Association
Point Lobos Foundation
Poppy Reserve/Mojave Desert Interpretive Association
Portola and Castle Rock Foundation
Prelado de los Tesoros de la purisima
Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association
Redwood Parks Conservancy
Roots and Branches Conservancy
Sacramento History Alliance
San Pasqual Battlefield Volunteer Association
Santa Barbara County Trails Council

Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation
Santa Monica Mountains Natural History Association
Save the Redwoods League
Sea and Desert Interpretive Association
Sierra Gold Parks Foundation
Sierra State Parks Foundation
Sonoma Ecology Center
Sonoma Petaluma Parks Inc.
Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association
Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
Supporters of the Wildwood Canyon State Park, Inc.
The Foundation at Hearst Castle (Friends of Hearst Castle)
The Olompali People
The San Onofre Parks Foundation
Torrey Pines Docent Society
Town of Shasta Interpretive Association
Valley of the Moon Natural History Association
Waddell Creek Association
Weaverville Joss House Association
Will Rogers Ranch Foundation

APPENDIX B: STUDY PARTICIPANTS

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Sasha Biscoe, President, Friends of Allensworth
Victor Bjelajac, Northcoast District Superintendent, California State Parks
Jessica Carter, Director of Parks and Public Engagement, Save the Redwoods League
Heidi Doyle, Executive Director, Sierra State Parks Foundation
Dan Falat, Central Coast District Superintendent, California State Parks
Bri Fordem, Executive Director, Anza-Borrego Foundation
Kent Gresham San Joaquin, Sector Superintendent, California State Parks
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Kristin Howland, Executive Director, Central Coast State Parks Association
Roger Isaacson, Vice President, Torrey Pines Docent Society
Kathleen Johnson, Executive Director, Los Angeles River State Park Partners
Carolyn Jones, President, Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association
Kathleen Lee, Executive Director, Point Lobos Foundation
Martin Lowenstein, Executive Director, Friends of China Camp
Maria Mowrey, Bay Area District Superintendent, California State Parks
Sarah Sweedler, President & CEO, Fort Ross Conservancy

INTERVIEWEES

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Bonny Hawley, Executive Director, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks
Kathleen Johnson, Executive Director, Los Angeles River State Park Partners
Carolyn Jones, President, Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association
Matthew Leffert, Executive Director, Jack London State Park Partners
Maria Mowrey, Bay Area District Superintendent, California State Parks
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Bruce Saito, President, Friends of Manzanar and Executive Director, California Conservation Corps
Paul Slavik, Director, California Outdoor Recreation Foundation
Richard Trent, Executive Director, Friends of Anacostia Park

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Anderson Marsh Interpretive Association
Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation
Anza-Borrego Foundation

Big Sur Historical Society
Big Sur Natural History Association
Boosters of Old Town San Diego
Calaveras Big Trees Association
California Outdoor Recreation Foundation
California State Parks Foundation
Central Coast Lighthouse Keepers
Central Coast State Parks Association
Coastside State Park Association
Crystal Cove Conservancy
Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association
Doheny State Beach Interpretive Association
Fort Ross Conservancy
Four Rivers Natural History Association
Friends 4 Picacho
Friends of Allensworth
Friends of China Camp
Friends of Ocotillo Wells
Friends of Sutter's Fort
Golden Gate National Park Conservancy
Huntington State Beach Junior Lifeguard Association
Jack London Park Partners
Literacy for Environmental Justice
Malibu Adamson House Foundation AKA Malibu Lagoon Museum
Malibu Creek Docent Association
Masons of California
McArthur-Burney Falls Interpretive Association
Mendocino Area Parks Association
Mendocino Woodlands Camp Assoc.
Monterey State Historic Park Association
Mount Diablo Interpretive Association
Mountain Parks Foundation
Napa Valley State Parks Association
Oceano Lifeguard Association, Inc.
Parks California
Plumas-Eureka State Park Association
Point Lobos Foundation
Portola and Castle Rock Foundation

Prelado de los Tesoros de la Purisima
Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association
Redwood Parks Conservancy
Santa Barbara County Trails Council
Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation
Save the Redwoods League
Sierra State Parks Foundation
Sonoma Ecology Center
Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
Torrey Pines Docent Society
Valley of the Moon Natural History Association

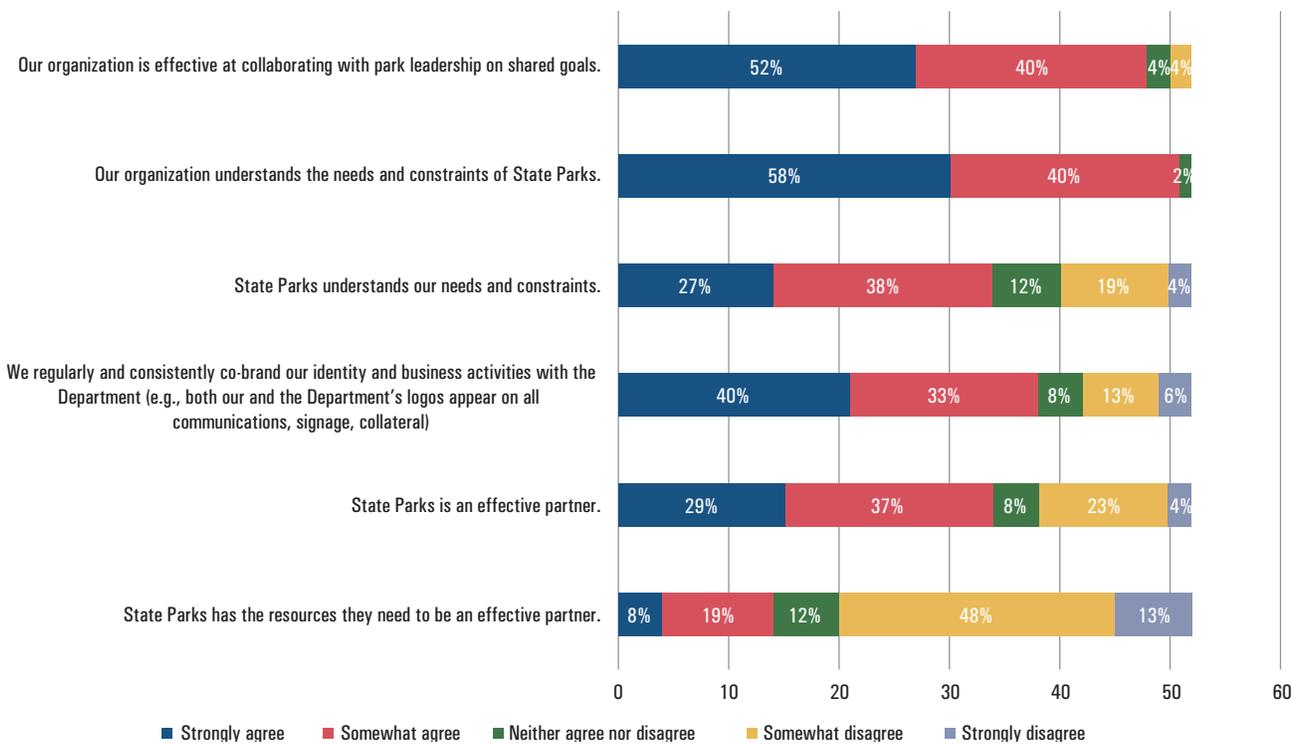
APPENDIX C: SURVEY RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS

METHODOLOGY

The survey tool included 47 demographic, open-ended, matrix, and Likert scale questions. This was administered to all of State Parks’ nonprofit partners with active partnership agreements, including but not limited to cooperating associations, operators and co-managers, fundraising partners, and program partners. Nearly half of all partners (47%) responded to this detailed survey. The following is a summary of findings from the nonprofit partnership survey, conducted from May 3 – June 5, 2022.

SURVEY RESULTS

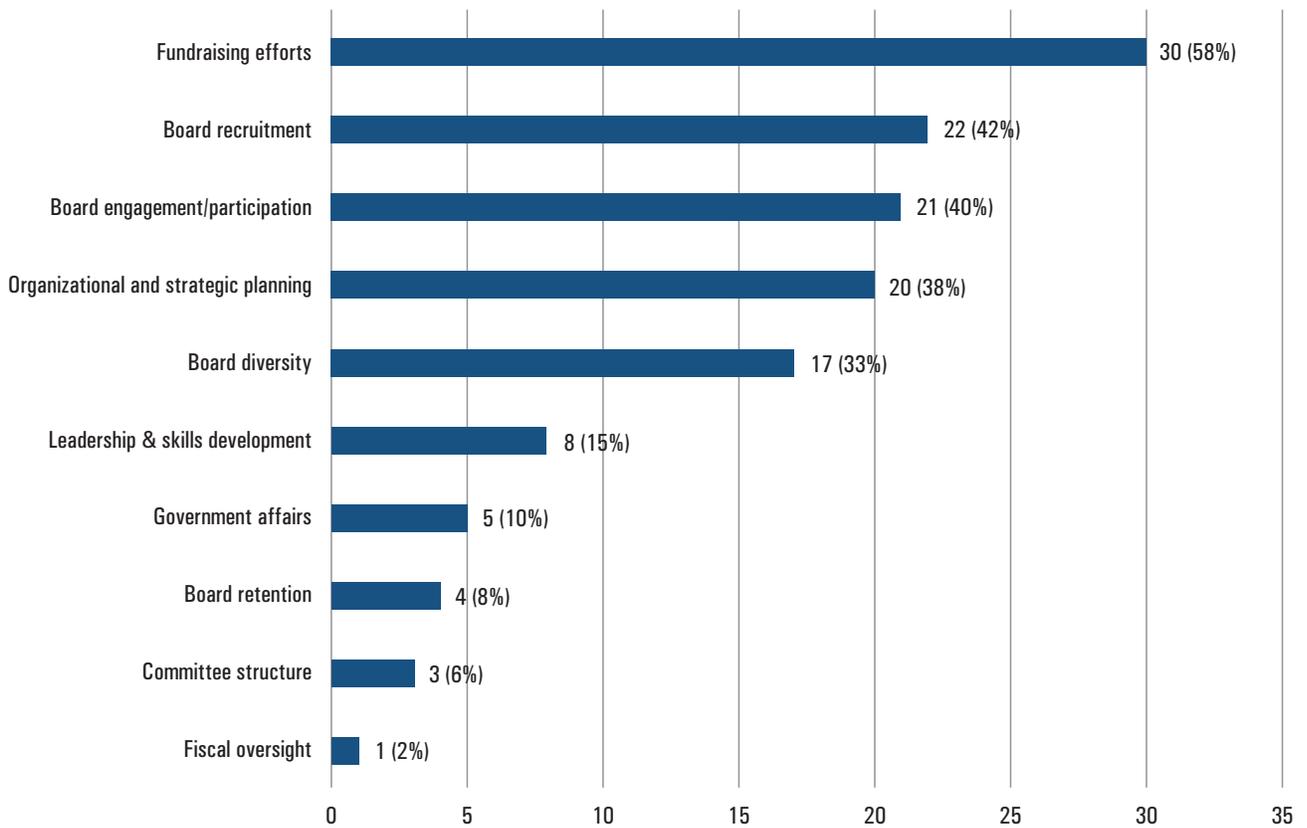
Figure 8. Attitudes & Perceptions



Nonprofits have an overall positive attitude about State Park partnerships but feel that state parks do not have sufficient resources to fulfill partners’ needs.

Figure 9. Board Challenges

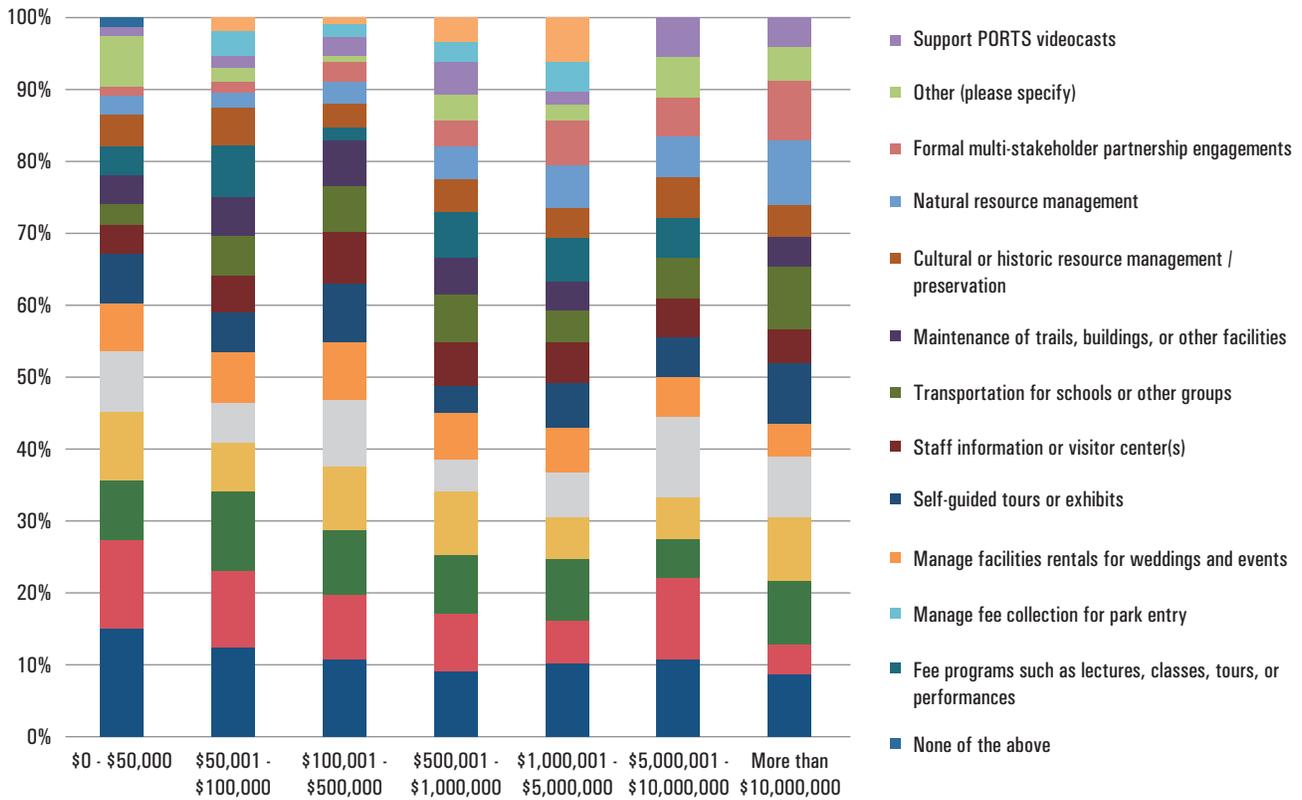
SURVEY QUESTION: Which areas are of the highest concern or greatest challenges for your board?



Other challenges partners described in open-ended questions included board retention and recruitment; struggles with fundraising, membership retention, and donor cultivation during the pandemic; and difficulties communicating their value to the park and to the public.

Figure 10. Organization Programs and Activities

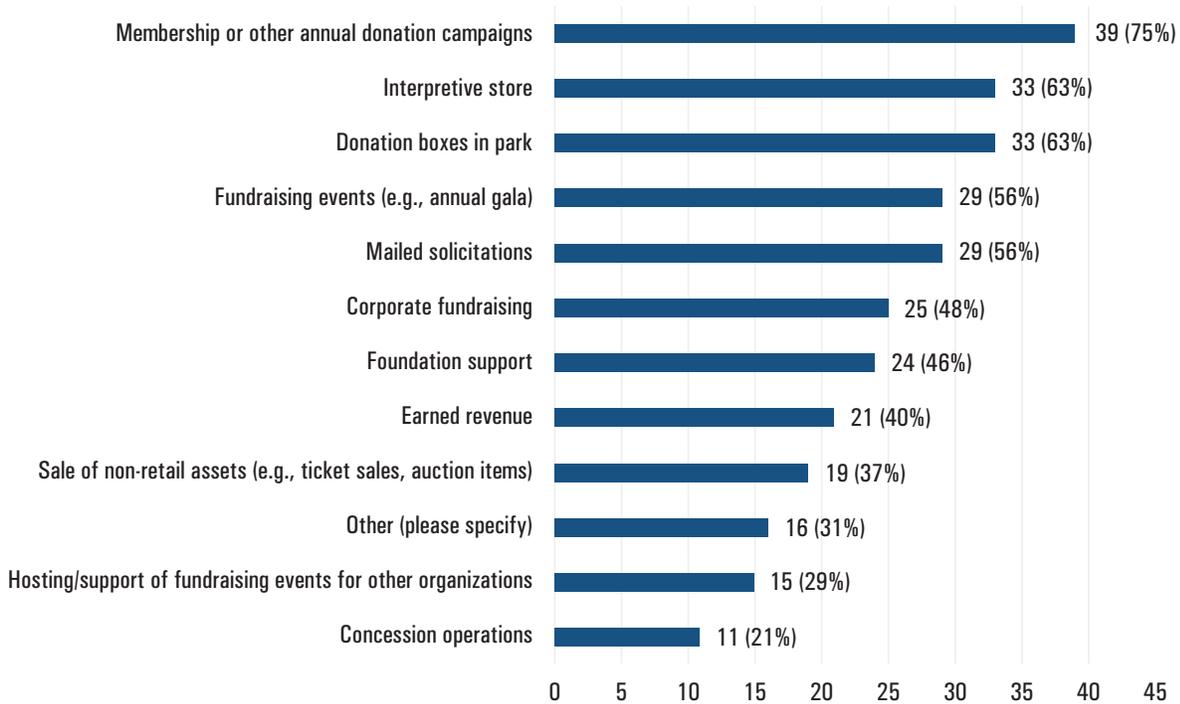
SURVEY QUESTION: Does your organization engage in any of the following programs or activities?



Nonprofit partners generally wear many hats and fulfill a wide range of park needs. When Potrero Group compared organization programs and activities by size, there were fewer differences between small, medium, and large organizations than expected.

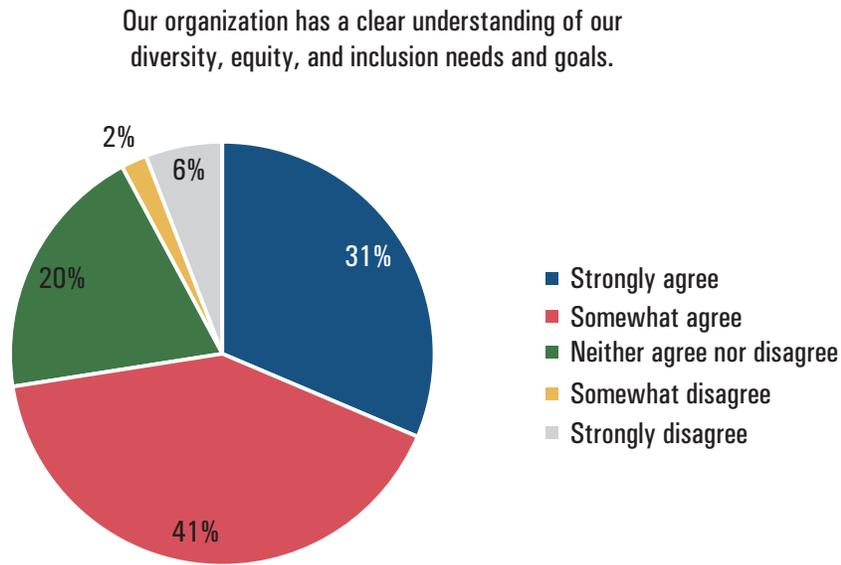
Figure 11. Fundraising Methods

SURVEY QUESTION: What methods do you use to fundraise?

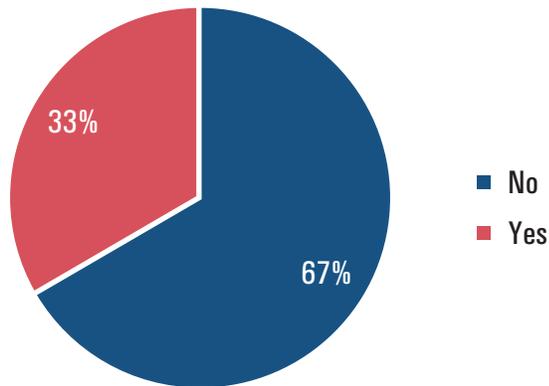


The top three fundraising methods are membership/other annual donations, donation boxes in park, and interpretive stores. We found no large differences when comparing by operation size and/or location of the nonprofit organizations.

Figure 12. Understanding of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Needs



Has your organization undertaken a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan or process?



About 72% of respondents “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” to the importance of implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion internally and externally. In contrast, fewer have plans to address these goals (33%).

Figure 13. Implementation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

SURVEY QUESTION: Please indicate where you have integrated diversity, equity, and inclusion into your organization's work:

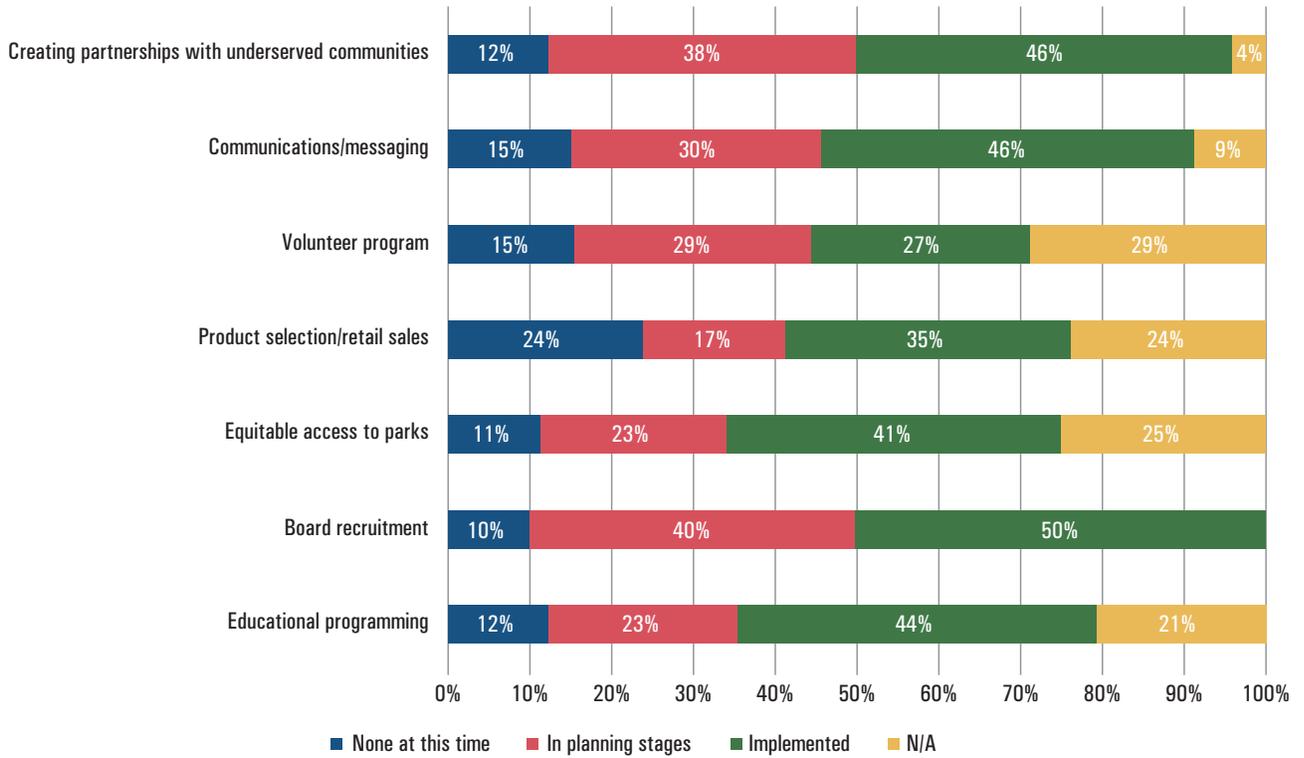
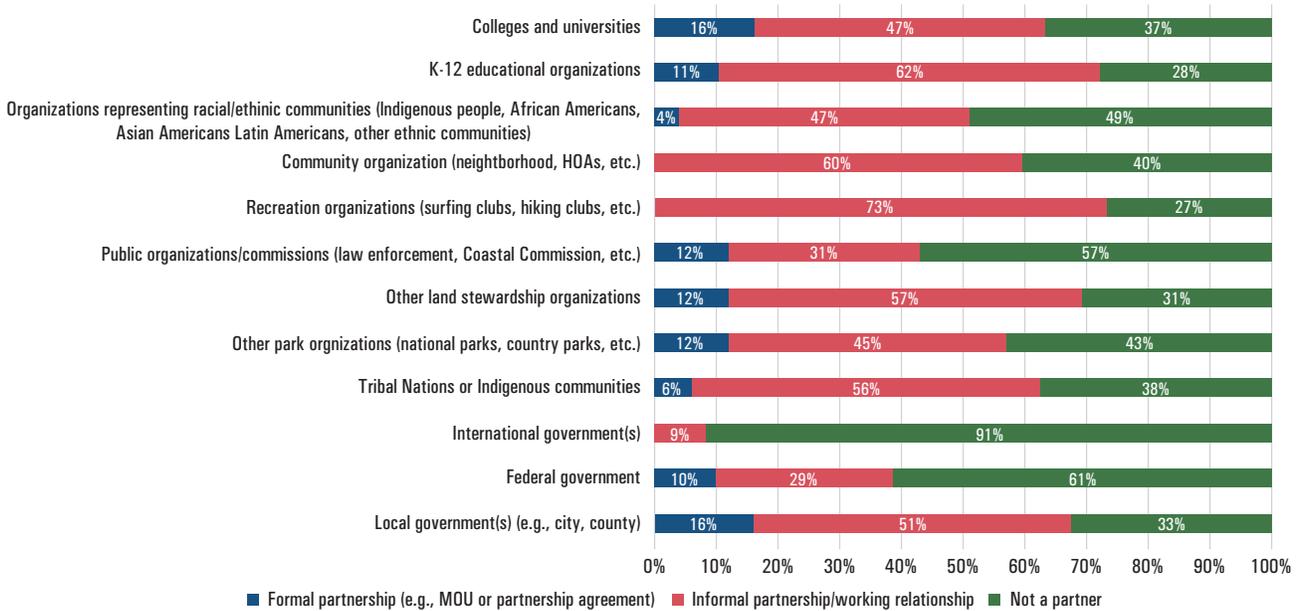


Figure 14. Relationship with Community Partners

SURVEY QUESTION: Does your organization have a relationship with any of the following?



While nonprofit partners generally do not have formal partnerships with the above organizations, informal partnerships and interactions generate invaluable experiences to the local communities (for example, see “LA River State Park Partners,” p. 21).

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STEERING COMMITTEE

The individuals and organizations below provided their expertise to the study. Potrero Group thanks these nonprofit leaders for contributing their invaluable time and insight.

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QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH – NONPROFIT TAX DATA

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**CALIFORNIA
STATE PARKS
FOUNDATION**

CREATING IMPACT:

A STUDY OF NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIP
IN CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS
