



March 3, 2014

Christine Kehoe
Lance Conn
Co-Chairs
Parks Forward Commission
California Natural Resources Agency Bldg.
1416 9th Street, Room 1414
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Informal Draft Outline of Parks Forward Commission Report

Dear Chairs Kehoe and Conn:

Thank you to the Commission for making available the outline of the anticipated first draft of the Parks Forward Commission Report. Sierra Club California has reviewed the outline and we look forward to the first draft. We continue to believe this report could serve as important guidance for carrying out the mission of the state parks for generations.

We do have suggestions for improving the draft report, based on the outline, and offer these here:

Section 1: History of Excellence

- a. *History of Leadership and Devotion:* This subsection should include a discussion of the public trust requirements of the state parks system.
- b. *California's World Class Parks:* This subsection should include reference to Californians' devotion to environmental quality, and the important role parks play in demonstrating and exemplifying that devotion.

Section 3: Challenges, Parks Forward Initiative, and Initial Findings

- a. *Analyses and State Response to Growing Crisis:* Our organization took issue with the Little Hoover Commission conclusion that the parks system organization was obsolete. We do believe there can and must be improvements, but we do not concur with the LHC's rather proposal to essentially divest the system of certain parks and its relatively unquestioning proposal to expand the "financial bridging" provided by local entities. While there were a number of good technical details in the report, we encourage the Parks Forward Commission to look well beyond this report for ideas and analysis. We question whether it, among the numerous reports produced by various entities, deserves to be highlighted in this subsection.
- d. *Parks Forward Commission Initial Findings:* This subsection should include a discussion of the outpouring of public support expressed for the State Parks when parks were closed or threatened with closure.

- d(ii) *A Need for Fundamental Change:* The needs listed in this sub-subsection of the draft outline glaringly misses noting the ecosystem services and environmental/open space/wildlife habitat provided by about a million acres of state parks lands. This is a core issue area and should be included among the competencies--even if it isn't a competency that has been fully realized. Also, it's important for the parks system to develop standards for managing the wildlands and ensuring that they continue to present ecosystem value and ecosystem services.

Section 4: California Parks' Future

- a. *Natural Resources, Iconic Landscapes, Rich History, and Diverse Culture are Protected and Valued:* This sub-subsection should include a brief discussion of the need for standards and best practices for management of natural lands in the state parks system. This can be expanded upon in subsection 5(a)
- c. *Parks Promote Active, Healthy Lifestyles and Communities:* This subsection should emphasize activities that are consistent with the park system's need to properly steward the natural resources and that also are consistent with the state's goals to reduce air pollution, including greenhouse gas pollution.

Section 5: Charting a New Course

- c. *Promote Healthy Lifestyles and Communities:* This subsection should note that, given the public trust responsibilities, the mission of the parks system, and the state's goals, expanded recreational opportunities must be consistent with state's environmental goals, and consistent with the protection of natural resources and ecosystem services of the parks.
- d. *Engage Youth:* Emphasis should be on increasing youth appreciation for natural resources and ability to enjoy nature for decades.

Section 6: Implementation

- f. *Secure Stable Sources of Public Funding:* This subsection should overtly address potential dedicated tax tools.

Again, thank you for sharing the outline and for the Commission's dedication to improving the state parks system.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Phillips
Director

CC: Ken Wiseman, Executive Director, Parks Forward