

Statement of Kathy Bailey, Anderson Valley Chamber of Commerce
Prepared for the Joint Assembly Committee hearing, November 1, 2011
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Good morning. **My name is Kathy Bailey and I am pleased to be here representing the Anderson Valley Chamber of Commerce.** We hope that the information we provide today will convince you that hurting our businesses and our local economy by closing Hendy Woods State Park is highly unlikely to improve the state's economy or help balance the State Budget.

Additionally, **I have been asked by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors to personally deliver the letter they unanimously adopted at their last meeting.** Members would certainly have been here this morning, but the timing conflicted with their regular Board meeting. They hope you will consider the letter in lieu of their testimony. Just so you have an idea of who is addressing you, I am also providing you a photo we took in the Board chambers. It's a good group of people and each of them has a long history in the County.

In brief, their letter states that **in 2009, tourism pumped \$297 million dollars into the County economy, and is the County's most important economic driver. Tourism employs more people than any other industry. Tax dollars attributable to tourism are a very significant part of the County's budget and further, tourism related taxes remitted to the state in 2009 amounted to an additional \$12.3 million. A 2008 study concluded that 74% of our visitors spent time in our state parks, and they ranked the quality of our parks as "high," rating them 4.6 on a scale of 5. In spite of all this, when the park closure list was published, eight of the 70 parks proposed for closure statewide, more than 10% of the total, were in only one of the state's 58 counties: Mendocino County.** The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors suggests that "you reconsider whether closing parks is an economically sound way to help balance the state budget." And if some parks must be targeted, they strongly urge you "to revise the criteria the Parks Department uses to identify closures to include consideration of the economic effects of the proposed closure on both community businesses and the county...."

Turning to our specific situation, **one of the targeted parks is Hendy Woods State Park near Philo in Anderson Valley, our community's only state park.** Anderson Valley is a community of around 3200 people spread out along almost 40 miles of State Route 128 in West Central Mendocino County. There are four towns—Yorkville, Boonville, Philo, and Navarro-- and pockets of population in the hills above the valley. Almost nowhere in Anderson Valley is closer than 35 minutes away from the nearest town outside the Valley, and from most places it's much longer. Although we are isolated in one way, we are also conveniently located to the urban centers to the south. **On a good day, Boonville is about two and a half hours north of the Golden Gate.**

Besides Hendy Woods, Anderson Valley's only other parks are a playground and a very small county park of around 15 acres.

Not so long ago, the Valley's economic life revolved around sheep, apples, and logging redwood timber. **More recently, tourism has come to dominate our economy, including tourism focused on tasting and buying our premium wines and our well-known local beer.**

One of our strengths as a visitor destination is our diversity. We can provide a relaxing time in beautiful surroundings with **a variety of activities available that appeal to a broad range of people. Closing Hendy Woods will rip the heart out of that mix.**

Here are some of the other features of Hendy Woods, and what visitors will lose if it closes:

Hendy Woods is over 816 acres of mostly forestland, with some meadows.

It has two groves of ancient redwoods totaling 80 acres, which are the only easily accessed old growth redwood groves of significant size not only in Anderson Valley, but in all of Mendocino County. People come to Mendocino County specifically to see and experience ancient redwoods but without Hendy Woods, they will have to go elsewhere, out of the County.

There are 94 campsites, by far the largest and most popular campgrounds in the area. Without camping, middle-income people and families will be largely priced out of an overnight stay. Closing the campsites at Hendy will eliminate more than 90% of campsites in the Valley.

The park has several miles of frontage on the Navarro River, the only place in the Valley with public access to the river. Without the park, there will be no place for anyone, visitor and local alike, to cool off and swim on a hot summer's day. We have no public swimming pool.

Criss-crossing the park are miles of hiking trails, and paths that are safe for walking and biking. **These trails and paths are the only public place in all of Anderson Valley where visitors and local people alike can walk or take a hike of any duration other than alongside a heavily used road or highway.**

Without Hendy Woods it is reasonable to assume we will lose a very substantial portion of our visitors. They will not be around to buy beer or wine, eat restaurant meals, stock up at our stores, or buy gifts at our art galleries. Nor will they pay sales tax on any of those items.

Because no one will have a peaceful, safe place to take a walk, hike, or bike, including people staying at a bed and breakfast or an expensive vacation rental for \$150 or more a night, it seems likely these customers also will go elsewhere. They won't be paying us their rent, nor will they be paying the 11% tax on accommodations, and they too will not buy beer or wine, eat restaurant meals, stock up at our stores, or buy gifts at our galleries. Nor will they pay sales tax on any of *those* items either.

Every business in Anderson Valley will experience a significant hit on its revenues if Hendy Woods is closed. Some will weather the storm. Others will not.

Since the economic downturn, Anderson Valley, like so many other communities, has been struggling to maintain the basic institutions that allow our community to function. Each of these has experienced financial strain, thanks to nearly catastrophic cutbacks by the County and State.

For instance, a few years ago, the community raised around \$1 million dollars in donations and borrowed close to \$2 million more to update and expand **the Anderson Valley Health Center, which has been in operation more than 35 years. Within less than 6 months of opening the doors on the remodeled building, the state eliminated a full third of the funding for the clinic, resulting in a fiscal emergency.**

Around that time, **State funding was eliminated for our Fairground**, which hosts many events throughout the year that bring thousands of visitors to Anderson Valley.

Simultaneously, County budget woes and the untimely off-duty death of a Deputy Sheriff, **left the people of Anderson Valley doing battle with County officials to avoid cutbacks to our Deputy Sheriff coverage.**

Meanwhile, of course, we were continuing to field our Volunteer Fire Department and the Volunteer Ambulance Association, which responds to all incidents on Highway 128 and elsewhere in the community.

Then, as community members were desperately writing letters, raising money, and crafting plans to try to rescue the Health Center, **we got word that the state planned to shut down Hendy Woods State Park—a centerpiece of the Valley's economic activity.**

Fortunately, it's not all bad news. This August, the Anderson Valley Health Center, in competition with over 800 other applicants, was one of 67 entities nationwide, only 2 of which were health facilities, that received life-saving federal funding. The specter of that catastrophe has been eliminated, at least for the time-being.

And that brings us to today.

We in Anderson Valley ask you: Does doing great harm to most of our businesses by closing Hendy Woods State Park really help the General Fund? It seems unlikely to us.

We strongly believe that every park is important. It took decades of effort to create Hendy Woods and we assume the same is true for each of the other state parks. However, we also strongly believe that **some parks are more important to the economy of their community than others. We know Hendy Woods is one of those parks.**

Along with the letter from the Anderson Valley Chamber of Commerce, you also have letters from the Anderson Valley Wine Growers Association and the Anderson Valley Community Services District, as well as the letter from the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors. We all are asking you to reconsider the economic ramifications of park closures and particularly the criteria that are being used to determine which parks will close. We believe that **if the purpose of the closures is to balance the state budget then one *must* consider the economic effect of closing those parks.** If the actions here in Sacramento hurt our local businesses and hurt the economic life of our communities and our county, we believe they will also hurt the overall state economy and the state budget. **This is not the solution to the problem. It's the right thing all around to keep Hendy Woods State Park open.**

Thank you very much for your interest.