



February 23, 2015

The Honorable Fran Pavley, Chair
Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Marc Levine, Chair
Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairpersons Pavley and Levine:

Testimony for the Parks Forward Joint Informational Hearing to be held on 02.24.2015

My name is Robert E. Doyle, General Manager of the East Bay Regional Park District and Co-Chair of State Parks Partners Coalition, representing public agencies managing State Parks.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication and thanks to the generosity of the funders.

Most of the State Park Partners manage parks in highly urbanized areas: Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco Bay Area. We are all spending local tax money to manage and maintain State Parks properties. The users are diverse and the parks heavily used. Our East Bay system sees 22 million visits a year and we currently spend \$5 million operating State Parks. But, like the rest of the State Park units, some are 60 years of age or older and in great need infrastructure investment. At Del Valle State Park, which sees 400,000 people per/year, the water system built by DPR in the 1960's needs to be replaced at a cost of more than \$3 million.

We desperately need a State partner like there used to be--a partner who provided per capita grants to local parks because they already have the capacity to do the work. Unfortunately there has not been a "true" park bond since Proposition 40 in 2002. That was 13 years ago!

As I visit many State Parks, there seems to have been a big investment in yellow caution tape in the past decade--it's everywhere: on restrooms, bridges, railings, trails, drinking fountains, picnic tables, even restrooms, and historical buildings. It's sad.

The parks are in desperate shape! Just imagine the impact on morale! And, imagine the impression this has on visitors.

I hope Parks Forward and the Department make a serious commitment to partnerships and recognizes the cost savings and outreach that partner agencies already provide to urban populations. What we need is incentives: financial help and support, rather than disincentives such as "please take this broken park off our hands."

We need to look together at the most efficient management models, including park boundaries for who operates what.

The report very much emphasizes the need to serve underserved urban families, especially youth. That is what we do. Some new parks may be needed in underserved areas, but funding partnerships to leverage money and programs, rather than developing new parks in urban areas, is faster and more cost effective.

The population of our State has grown and become much more diverse, a trend that will continue into the future. When young people visit their State Parks today, many are broken or poorly maintained because there has been little to no State investment in recent years.

Park agencies employ many young people every year in our parks. They get training, skills, and much needed good green jobs. There is a huge opportunity to provide good public and private jobs fixing and maintaining the large backlog of park maintenance and infrastructure needs in the State Park system.

80 years ago Newton Drury said that parks are more than picnic places, they are places for memories and reveries. Today State Parks has preserved nearly 1.5 million acres of the most pristine and diverse landscapes in California at great cost and effort. They need to be maintained and managed, not just purchased.

Today our citizens need those positive memories and reveries more than ever. For the physical and mental health of their families and for the environmental and economic health of our state.

Thank you so very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert E. Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert E. Doyle
General Manager – East Bay Regional Park District
Co-Chair – State Park Partners Coalition

Cc: The Honorable Members of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
The Honorable Members of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
Mr. Bill Craven, Chief Consultant, Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
Ms. Diane Colborn, Chief Consultant, Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee