

Parks Forward Staff Note: This summary was created by professional consultants Kearns & West based upon four focus groups with Department staff conducted in May and June of 2014. The intent of the focus groups was to better engage staff with the Parks Forward process and solicit feedback on the April 23 staff working draft. This feedback is helping to inform the next iteration of the Parks Forward Commission's plan, along with input from the public (including through the May/June 2014 public workshops), Park partners, and other stakeholders.

Memorandum

Date: July 3, 2014

To: Ken Wiseman, Parks Forward Initiative

From: Eric Poncelet and Ben Gettleman, Kearns & West

Re: Parks Forward Initiative – Summary of May/June 2014 California State Parks Focus Group Findings

Attached please find a summary of Kearns & West's May/June 2014 California State Parks focus group session findings. A report outline is included below.

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Summary of May/June 2014 California State Parks Focus Group Findings

I. Introduction and Background

This Memorandum presents our summary findings from four focus group sessions conducted with California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) staff in May and June 2014.

The primary purpose of the focus group sessions was to solicit feedback on draft recommendations in the [April 23, 2014 Staff Working Draft](#) being considered by the Parks Forward Commission. Key recommendation topic areas included:

- Build an Effective Department of Parks and Recreation
- Create a New Organization to Support Parks
- Protect Natural and Cultural Resources
- Improve Access for all Californians
- Promote Healthy Lifestyles and Communities
- Engage Youth
- Secure Stable Public Funding

The focus groups also served to better engage State Parks staff in the Parks Forward process.

This document represents a synthesis of major themes that emerged across the focus groups; it is not intended to represent a comprehensive list of comments provided. The focus groups included broad representation from State Parks personnel both in terms of geography and staff level. The list of focus group sessions is included below:

Date	Participants	Location
May 14, 2014	Southern California Division	Long Beach
May 21, 2014	Headquarters Division	Sacramento
May 28, 2014	Northern California Division	Oakland
June 4, 2014	Senior Parks Staff	Sacramento

Approximately 20-25 State Parks staff members participated in each Division focus group session. Participants were invited at the recommendation of senior State Parks staff and supervisors. Participants were selected due to their knowledge of the issues and their ability to share their views. Many had also participated in the first round of focus group sessions in August 2013. Over 40 individual participated in the Senior Staff session, which included Deputy Directors, Policy Chiefs, and District Superintendents.

The focus groups were conducted using a combination of breakout group and full group discussions (the Senior Staff session was held entirely as one group). In addition to providing oral feedback during group discussions, participants were invited to provide written comments on sticky notes on the topics of “Build an Effective Department of Parks and Recreation” and “Create a New Organization to Support Parks” (participants were invited to provide written comments on sticky notes for all of the topics during the Senior Staff session). Participants were also invited to submit additional written comments within one week of their focus group session. All oral and written comments were considered in the development of this report.

This document is organized into four main sections plus appendices:

- **Section I** introduces the document and provides background information on the focus groups.
- **Section II** presents the overarching findings from the focus groups.
- **Section III** presents key cross-cutting themes organized by the different recommendation topics. This section summarizes general comments made on the main topic areas.
- **Section IV** summarizes comments made on the individual recommendations and organizes them according to the following categories: 1) perceived strengths, 2) suggested improvements, and 3) considerations and keys to success.
- *Appendix A* includes a sample focus group agenda.
- *Appendix B* includes a transcription of the wall chart notes taken by facilitators during the Senior Staff focus group session.
- *Appendix C* includes transcriptions of the sticky notes posted by participants during the focus groups.

II. Overarching Findings

In the focus groups sessions, State Parks staff expressed a wide variety of views with regard to the recommendations contained in the *April 23, 2014 Staff Working Draft Report*. Focus group participants were broadly supportive of the topic areas covered in the report, although staff views differed on some of the proposed recommendations. There were only a few recommendations over which participants showed significant concern. The following highlights overarching themes that emerged across the four focus groups:

- **Acknowledge and Build on Existing State Parks Efforts.** Participants across the focus groups suggested that future versions of the report do a better job situating the recommendations within the context of what the Department is already doing (and in some cases doing well). Several expressed the view that the Department could effectively address many of the challenges highlighted in the report if only it had more funding and staff resources.
- **Appropriate Role of Partnerships.** Participants across all of the focus groups recognized the critical role that partners play in the functioning of State Parks. However, many were concerned that the report treated partnerships as a solution to all of State Parks' problems. They wanted a more nuanced treatment in the report that acknowledges that some existing partnerships are not as helpful as they could or should be. In general, they felt that the focus should be on using partnerships selectively and strategically to address appropriate needs. Many participants supported the idea of conducting an assessment of existing partnerships and analyzing what is working and not working.
- **Effective Department.** Across all focus groups, the "Build an Effective Department of Parks and Recreation" section generated the most interest. Several participants recommended that the title be changed to "Build a *More* Effective Department" to reflect the work already taking place. Many felt that it did not make sense to address the other recommendations in the report until the Department first "got its own house in order." Feedback on specific recommendations included:

- There was broad support for “aligning and modernizing technology and accounting systems,” although participants highlighted different ways to go about doing this.
- Participants were mixed on the topic of peace officer versus non-peace officer leadership. Many felt that the report’s framing of this sensitive issue was overly divisive and recommended putting it in terms of “hiring the most qualified person for the position.”
- Participants were cautious about (and in some cases resistant to) the recommendation to establish an “internal efficiency office”. They were concerned that this office, especially if composed of external consultants, would not be able to successfully anticipate the many road blocks to implementation that would certainly arise. There were also concerns that staff would not sufficiently “buy in” to the concept, which would be a major roadblock in itself. Senior staff in particular was strongly in favor of having an internal-only “transition team” lead this effort.

Many participants were concerned about the implementability of several of the recommendations under this topic because they would require institutional or even statutory changes. There was strong support for including an additional recommendation that addresses the identified need for improved internal communications (e.g., between headquarters and the field). Many viewed improved internal communications as critical to the success of the Parks Forward Initiative.

- **Mixed Views on the New Support Entity.** Many participants were open to the recommendation of creating a New Support Entity, generally liked the idea of State Parks having a close partner and ally, and saw a distinct role for the new entity. This partner could work effectively, appropriately, and in an aligned manner with the Department to help State Parks better achieve its mission. Other commenters, however, questioned whether a New Support Entity was needed at all. Some felt that State Parks, with sufficient funding, is the most appropriate entity for addressing the needs identified in the *Staff Working Draft Report*. Others questioned whether the roles identified for the New Support Entity were duplicative with existing partners; several suggested that the State Parks Foundation could adequately fill many of these roles.
- **Lack of Clarity and Detail.** Many participants felt that the draft report would benefit from additional clarity around key terms. Some of the terms mentioned for clarification include “partnerships,” “health,” and “promote.” Other participants were concerned that the current draft lacked sufficient detail on exactly how the recommendations would be implemented.
- **No One-Size-Fits-All Solutions.** A recurrent theme across the focus groups was that different parks have different challenges. There will likely be few one-size-fits-all solutions.
- **More Analysis Needed to Inform Recommendations.** Many participants noted that while a number of recommendations include the word “increase” or “expand,” there is little quantifiable data in the report. Most felt that determining a clear baseline would ensure a common understanding of how *much* of an increase would be needed to achieve success.

- **Adequate Staffing and Funding Are Key to Implementation.** Many participants noted the Department's current inability to implement recommendations without increased staff and funding.

III. Key Cross-Cutting Themes by Recommendation Topic Area

What follows are key themes of participant input organized by recommendation topic area. These themes represent issues that were discussed during many or all of the focus groups, or that cut across individual recommendations made within each topic area. They are presented in no particular order. Where applicable, we have identified unique perspectives from different regions and/or staff levels.

A. Topic Area 1: Build an Effective Department of Parks and Recreation (ED)

- There was broad support for aligning and modernizing technology and accounting systems. Implementing this recommendation was generally recognized as the "linchpin" to many other improvements at State Parks.
- There were mixed views expressed regarding aligning and modernizing leadership and staffing at State Parks. Many participants thought that change was needed to allow for non-peace officers to be eligible for leadership positions across State Parks; others felt the current system generally works and did not see a compelling need for significant change. Some participants also noted that State Parks had more promotion opportunities in the past. There was broad support for reframing this issue in terms of hiring the "most qualified person for the position" rather than as a peace officer vs. non-peace officer issue. Some participants stated that being able to hire qualified candidates will require State Parks to address a range of personnel-related issues, such as the length of the hiring process, pay inequity, and the lack of training and recruitment.
- There were mixed views regarding creating a new "office of operational effectiveness" to implement the recommendations. Some participants saw value in having internal staff and external consultants dedicated to implementing recommendations, while others felt that State Parks could achieve the goal internally.
- There was broad support for changing the title of this topic area to "Build a *More* Effective Department," to reflect efforts already underway to improve organizational effectiveness.
- At the Senior Staff focus group session, participants cautioned that recommendations within this topic area should be careful about references to improved "efficiency". They pointed out that "efficient" is not necessarily an appropriate word for public agencies, since they are not set up to make money as in the private sector. They felt that State Parks should strive to *economize* where possible, and that the ultimate goal of Parks Forward is to improve the *effectiveness* of State Parks.

B. Topic Area 2: Create a New Organization to Support Parks (NO)

- Staff expressed mixed views regarding the proposed new Support Entity. Some participants thought it could bring much needed resources to State Parks. Others expressed concern that it could add a layer of bureaucracy well as duplicate efforts by both the Department and existing partners such as the CA State Parks Foundation. Some feared that the Support Entity might come to have oversight authority over State

Parks. Still others argued that State Parks could likely implement the same improvements if it had adequate funding and staffing.

- Several participants supported the concept of the Support Entity as a “junior partner”. The entity could support the State Parks mission and help implement programs effectively while leaving the oversight and decision-making role to State Parks. Many participants cautioned against relinquishing control to an external organization, as well as displacing Department staff.
- Participants highlighted the importance of aligning the goals and priorities of Parks and the Support Entity, as well as the need for transparency and good communication.

C. Topic Area 3: Protect Natural and Cultural Resources (PR)

- Staff broadly supported improving State Parks capacity for protecting natural and cultural resources.
- Participants emphasized that State Parks needs to expand its *internal* capacity for protecting natural and cultural resources, and that partnerships are just one approach to achieving the larger goal.
- Participants noted that natural and cultural resources are the biggest areas of backlog at State Parks. As such, it is appropriate for the Parks Forward Commission to make this topic a priority.
- Participants noted that State Parks often places more emphasis on natural resources than cultural resources, which was sometimes referred to as “the stepchild” of resource management.
- Participants expressed that it is important to better understand the inventory of resources in order to manage them more effectively. Data and analysis are needed to make informed decisions and to identify programmatic and statewide priorities for resource management.

D. Topic Area 4: Improve Access for All Californians (IA)

- There was broad support among focus group participants for improving State Parks’ capacity to provide access for all Californians.
- Participants supported the view that State Parks’ mission needs to be considered in the context of improving access. There were mixed views on whether State Parks should create and operate urban parks; some felt it was beyond the scope of State Parks’ core function, while others felt State Parks should provide what urban communities want (e.g., activities, picnic areas and local access) even if that means revisiting and updating the mission.
- Participants felt that partnerships are critical to improving access to parks and noted the importance of having clear and complementary partner roles. Some suggested that State Parks consider partnering with local and regional parks to develop and operate urban parks. Similarly, participants observed opportunities for State Parks to partner with transit agencies and technology companies to improve access.
- Participants acknowledged that State Parks is already participating in partnerships that improve access – including providing funding for urban parks, partnering with local and regional parks to create seamless networks, and removing transportation obstacles – and recommended that any improvements build on existing efforts.

E. Topic Area 5: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and Communities (HL)

- There was broad support among focus group participants for State Parks to more directly and effectively promote healthy lifestyles and communities. Participants noted that addressing the health issue can help make State Parks more relevant to Californians. Several participants suggested that partners could help promote the health benefits of parks as well as provide financial support.
- Participants noted that health is a societal level problem, and that the scope of State Parks' involvement in this issue needs to be appropriate and consistent with its mission.
- Participants stated that institutional barriers and resistance from headquarters need to be reduced to allow parks to try new things, including addressing health in creative ways. They also noted that some programs will need to be locally tailored and that there should be flexibility to allow that.
- Participants believed that success in promoting healthy lifestyles will be linked to engaging more youth, improving access to parks, and reducing other barriers (e.g., fees, bureaucratic hurdles, and funding cuts).
- It would be more effective for State Parks to integrate healthy food into the things it already does (interpretive, events, etc.) than to preach about healthy food.
- A key to success will be for State Parks to think creatively beyond traditional park uses and values, and to avoid being hindered or limited by tradition.
- A current limitation is the idea that one solution needs to be applied to all parks (one-size-fits-all). Some ideas should be created and implemented at the local level.

F. Topic Area 6: Engage Youth (EY)

- Focus group participants shared the view that engaging youth will be critical to making state parks relevant now and in the future. Making parks *culturally* relevant is a key to this success.
- Participants strongly believed that State Parks needs to better address barriers to engaging and employing youth, including youth access to parks, hiring processes, and pay.
- Participants noted that a key to success will be finding appropriate community partners to help reach out to and help market parks to youth.

IV. Comments on Individual Recommendations

What follows are comments provided by participants on specific recommendations in the *Staff Working Draft Report*. The comments have been organized under each Topic Area into the following categories: perceived strengths; suggested improvements; and considerations and keys to success.

A. Topic Area 1: Build an Effective Department of Parks and Recreation (ED)

Recommendation ED 1: Align and Modernize Technology and Accounting Systems

Perceived Strengths

- Addressing technology will make State Parks stronger and more efficient in all other areas. It will reduce the amount of time needed to complete a variety of tasks, freeing up more availability to focus on mission-critical needs.

- Better fiscal tracking will help make the case for funding. It will help State Parks and legislators and other decision-makers understand how much it costs to run individual parks and maintain a targeted level of service.
- State Parks needs to address the general lag time between entering data into and getting data out of systems.

Suggested Improvements

- The report should clarify which barriers or processes State Parks can affect and which it cannot (i.e., some barriers are due to statewide agencies).
- Add “business systems” to title to incorporate other core State Parks systems including Maximo and CAMP.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- Some actions may require legislative changes (e.g., the Department of General Services).
- The benefits and efficiencies that come from standardization need to be balanced with the benefit of having local control. Some systems should be implemented on a state-wide basis (e.g., accepting credit cards) while others should be more locally specific.
- State Parks is a unique state agency; it collects revenues from many locations, some of which are in remote areas, which presents challenges (e.g., lack of Internet access, deployment of technology, etc.). For example, a hybrid or customized version of FI\$CAL should be considered to allow for these differences.
- State Parks Headquarters and the Districts need to be using the same system with the same data. If an accounting or budgeting question is asked, staff should receive the same answer from the system regardless of where they are located. Different field offices currently have individual systems that don't speak to one another.
- The long-term maintenance (and related staffing) of new systems needs to be taken into consideration. New technology needs adequate staff support or it will fail.
- Staff training will be critical to the implementation of modernized systems.
- Partners and concessionaires also need to modernize their fiscal tracking systems and be held accountable.
- Specific examples of systems that should be modernized include:
 - Fiscal tracking [in real time]
 - Procurement [simplify and increase spending authority]
 - Fee collection [centralize and automate]
 - Budgeting [multi-year]
 - Visitor tracking
 - Electronic signatures for documents
 - Personnel tracking [electronic timesheets]

Recommendation ED 2: Align and Modernize Leadership and Staffing

Perceived Strengths

- Providing more opportunities for advancement will attract talented staff to State Parks.
- The report recognizes that equitable access to training opportunities is needed to develop and mentor State Parks staff.
- There was general support for having education requirements for all State Parks superintendents.

Suggested Improvements

- The report includes contradicting recommendations that need to be reconciled:
 - *“The Department should encourage broader peace officer participation in all Department core functions including natural and cultural resource stewardship, operations, facilities, visitor enjoyment, and interpretation.” “The Department should consider creating a separate division for law enforcement, as the National Park Service, East Bay Regional Park Service, and other state parks have done.”*
- The report needs to go beyond the emotional “badge vs. non-badge” framing of the issue. Approaching the issue from “the most qualified applicant” reframes the issue, which is currently worded in the report in a charged way.
- The recommendation seems to be based on principle and needs to make a closer examination of the trade-offs.
- This section should be broadened to include all personnel-related issues, such as the length of the hiring process, pay inequity, and the lack of training and recruitment.
- Rangers are already doing things beyond law enforcement in many cases; the report does not adequately acknowledge this.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- The approach should be site-specific instead of instituting broad sweeping changes and policies that apply to the entire Department. Avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach as different parks have different needs with respect to law enforcement.
- Decisions regarding changes to the promotion process need to be based on analysis and data. For example, would a new approach be cost effective? What are the overall fiscal implications?
- Various structural barriers may impede implementation of this recommendation. Legal constraints will need to be addressed; for example, there is currently a legal mandate for peace officer supervision. State Parks is hampered by the civil service system and labor relations consideration such as collective bargaining.
- Any promotion-related changes need to be reflected in an improved exam process; exams are closely connected to the promotion process. Low pay and salary compaction are also barriers to attracting new staff. There should be better alignment between pay and responsibility/expertise.
- Peace officers reporting to non-peace officers could be problematic. There is a chain of command issue.
- There were more opportunities for promotion at State Parks in the past. The promotion strategy should consider previous approaches as well as new ones. For example, consider returning to the “chief ranger” model instead of the current superintendent model.
- Staffing levels should be aligned with the State Parks mission. What does State Parks want to be, and what does it need to accomplish it?
- A possible constraint for the effective implementation of this recommendation is the perceived disconnect between State Parks headquarters and field staff. This disconnect could be addressed by moving Field Division Chiefs back into field locations.
- Training is needed for all superintendents in areas like project management, budgeting and other business skills. Multi-disciplinary “cross-training” is happening in some divisions and should be applied more broadly throughout the Department.
- State Parks needs to have more diversity in its staff. State Parks should bring back recruiters to find more diverse and talented candidates.
- Creating a new promotion model will take time to implement and will require a cultural shift at State Parks. It will not happen overnight.

Recommendation ED 3: Facilitate and Support Effective Partnerships

Perceived Strengths

- The report recognizes that State Parks staff needs training in order to be able to create and manage partnerships more effectively.
- The report recognizes that partnerships add value and bring new tools to State Parks.
- Partners can help restore staffing levels by performing the functions of unfunded positions at State Parks.

Suggested Improvements

- Parks Forward should conduct an assessment or analysis of existing partnerships and what is working and not working. This will inform the development of criteria for effective partnerships.
- The report needs to distinguish the different types of State Parks partnerships – there are operating partners, cooperating partners, concessionaire partners – and they are managed/operate differently. The report should also more clearly articulate types of partnerships desired.
- The report should specify that partner and Department missions need to be aligned. Some partners have goals that don't align clearly with State Parks. For instance, concessionaires take in money that does not directly benefit the park.
- Instead of giving the report such a heavy focus on partnerships, it should focus on parks as a public resource that requires greater public funding. The report should more clearly identify barriers to partnerships.
- The report's statement that the "Department's role must change from direct provider of services to facilitator and collaborator" is concerning (this view was expressed by some participants). The Department still has the most on-the-ground knowledge and should retain a lead role in many areas; transitioning State Parks out of the role of direct provider is an overstatement.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- State Parks should focus on internal improvements before engaging in more partnerships (this view was expressed by many participants across the focus groups). State Parks needs to identify appropriate roles and establish clear protocols and expectations for partners and not supplant the tasks and roles of State Parks staff. State Parks should ultimately retain responsibility for delivering core functions and making decisions. It is important that State Parks maintain control and oversight.
- State Parks should not engage in partnerships just for the sake of doing them (not all partnerships are good). It should be clear "why". As one participant noted: "Parks needs to become better at saying 'yes' and 'no' to partnerships".
 - Need to consider the risk versus the benefit of engaging in partnerships.
 - Some partnerships do not benefit State Parks and should be ended.
 - State Parks needs to better track the costs of partnerships to inform its decision-making.
- The Department needs to continually re-visit partnerships to make sure they are working and are worth the time and resources being invested, and State Parks should have the ability to end them when needed. It is important to measure success and evaluate.
- State Parks has models of existing partnerships that should be used to inform improvements.

- Managing partnerships is resource-intensive and requires adequate staffing. Moreover, partnerships need to be able to survive staffing changes; focusing on teams instead of individuals would help address this.

Recommendation ED 4: Align and Modernize Governance

Perceived Strengths

- There was broad support for adding clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Commissions, although participants acknowledged this issue to be of lesser importance than some of the other challenges addressed in the report.

Suggested Improvements

- The recommendation should be broadened from a discussion solely about Commissions to include other agencies that “govern” the department, such as CalHR, the Coastal Commission, DGS, and the Department of Finance. These control agencies create many more inefficiencies than the four Commissions.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- All Commissions should support one State Parks mission.
- Commissions could play an expanded role in securing money from the legislature, generally advocating for State Parks, and interacting with the press.
- There are too many issues within each Commission to be able to combine them.
- State Parks needs a standardized model for Commissions.

Recommendation ED 5: Ensure Successful Implementation by Investing in Expertise and Providing Authority to Achieve Alignment and Modernization

Perceived Strengths

- This recommendation addresses *implementation* of Parks Forwards, which will be a key to its success.
- It is a good idea to have dedicated State Parks staff working on implementation of improvements.
- Using an impartial third party to implement can be a strength.

Suggested Improvements

- The report lacks clarity and detail regarding how would this happen. For example, what decision-making authority will this group have?
- Using existing, experienced State Parks staff would be more effective than bringing in external consultants, due to the deeper understanding that staff will have over structures, processes, barriers and history (many participants supported this idea). External consultants may not understand State Parks deeply enough to make good decisions.
- Many of the Senior Staff participants in particular recommended that the operational effectiveness team be internal only (i.e., an internal “transition team”). Other participants also felt that existing State Parks staff could perform this role if State Parks had more funding and staff.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- This new office might add another layer of bureaucracy.

- This office will likely make some State Parks staff nervous. There will need to be clear communications with staff at all levels throughout the process.
- This division should exist for a finite period of time (i.e., have a sunset date) and have a clearly defined scope. It should also exist within the context of an ongoing process of making improvements at State Parks.
- Making internal improvements to State Parks should draw on improvements made by other agencies (e.g., Caltrans, DMV), noting how they did it.
- There will be roadblocks along the way to making State Parks more modern (e.g., DGS requirements). This effort needs to acknowledge the difference between making the decision to become more modern and efficient, and the reality of implementing.

B. Topic Area 2: Create a New Organization to Support Parks (NO)

Note: Participants preferred to focus their comments on the new Support Entity in broad terms, rather than comment on individual proposed recommendations. This section therefore is not organized by specific recommendation.

Perceived Strengths

- The Support Entity could improve connections to local stakeholders, and local and regional projects and parks.
- The Support Entity may have the flexibility to do things that State Parks cannot do, and it could potentially help State Parks do things more efficiently. Appropriate roles mentioned by participants included: fundraising, marketing, and supporting enterprise functions. Participants were divided as to the role of land acquisition.
- The Support Entity could help remove barriers. For instance, the Support Entity could potentially provide a mechanism to support large State Parks projects without needing to go through DGS.

Suggested Improvements

- The report needs to clarify the role and structure of the Support Entity. It is not clear how the new organization would be structured, and what its relationship with State Parks would be. The report also needs to clarify how the Support Entity would be created and who would run it.
- The report needs more detail on how the Support Entity would be integrated with local and regional support agencies.
- It is unclear how this new entity would be related to the State Parks Foundation. Some questioned whether the Support Entity would be duplicative with the Foundation, while others felt the Foundation could fulfill many of the roles outlined for the Support Entity.
- To help make the case for a Support Entity, the report should more clearly define the Department's needs and then specify which entities will fill that need – the Department, the New Entity, the CA State Parks Foundation, or some other organization.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- State Parks should focus on making internal improvements before partnering with a Support Entity. It needs to be better prepared to work in this type of partnership.
- Having consistency of mission is critical – State Parks and the Support Entity need to be working toward the same vision and goals.
- State Parks and the Support Entity need to build a true partnership, with roles and responsibilities that are well thought out and make sense.
- The Support Entity needs to understand the State Parks regulatory environment.

- The report should reference existing models of support entities (e.g., National Parks Service) and highlight best practices that fit well with State Parks.
- It might make sense to have multiple partnerships to supplement State Parks instead of creating a single, large entity.
- It is important that State Parks have adequate staffing to work with the Support Entity and manage the partnership.
- State Parks recently created a Marketing and Business Development Division, and some participants observed that there would likely be overlap between this new division and the Support Entity.
- The report seems to rely heavily on the Support Entity to make State Parks function effectively.

C. Topic Area 3: Protect Natural and Cultural Resources (PR)

Recommendation PR 1: Develop Partnerships to Improve Natural Resource Management and Address Climate Change Impacts

Perceived Strengths

- Developing partnerships spreads the responsibility of natural resource management among many (i.e., State Parks does not have to do it alone). These partnerships would maximize limited resources and bring in expertise, making it easier to address complex projects. They could reduce costs, fill in data gaps, and allow for better long-term planning and coordination.
- This recommendation recognizes the issue and challenge of climate change. There is a political focus on climate change, and more funding might be available to address it in the future.

Suggested Improvements

- The text of this recommendation does not adequately recognize constraints to developing partnerships.
- There should be metrics and criteria for identifying appropriate partners.
- State Parks has a number of natural resource priorities and challenges that do not relate to climate change – these should be more explicitly addressed in the report.
- Interpretation is underrepresented and undervalued in the report; this connects directly to natural and cultural resources.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- Participants offered many comments on the role of partnerships in this recommendation, including:
 - Partnerships are costly to manage, time consuming and require adequate staffing levels. There needs to be an appropriate internal commitment (staffing levels and funding) to manage partners.
 - State Parks should invest in staffing if it wants partnerships to flourish.
 - It is important for partners to understand they are in a supporting role.
 - The approach needs to be consistent with State Parks mission and *add value* (economic, etc.). There needs to be shared vision and objectives.
 - It is important to focus on the *quality* instead of the quantity of partnerships.
- State Parks needs to be strategic and engage its leadership in addressing climate change. There are risks involved, and doing so might bring State Parks into an issue that

is not one of its top priorities. State Parks should avoid being in a situation where it's solving the problems of other agencies.

- Acquisitions may not be needed to address the goals.
- Specific suggestions included:
 - Partner with University of California for research and pilot projects.
 - Engage the UC Berkeley Citizen Scientist Program.
 - Partner with Cal Fire for burning and vegetation management.
 - Install more solar energy panels on State Parks facilities, and look into carbon credit trading.

Recommendation PR 2: Implement Preservation and Community Partnerships to Protect and Restore Cultural Sites and Encourage Adaptive Reuse Where Appropriate

Perceived Strengths

- This recommendation recognizes that protecting cultural resources is a core State Parks function. The Department is not able to successfully manage these resources currently.
- Working with partners would help improve the overall base of knowledge and bring in added expertise to protect cultural resources.
- The Department needs partners to help make things happen. Historically State Parks has been hands off when it comes to adaptive reuse; it is too expensive.

Suggested Improvements

- Having three pilot adaptive reuse partnership projects may not be necessary.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- Consider limiting adaptive reuse to historic structures. Generally, adaptive reuse is not a panacea for cultural resource management.
- Partnerships and adaptive reuse need to be consistent with the State Parks mission.
- State Parks needs an engagement strategy to build partnerships and trust with tribal groups and local partners (e.g., museums, etc.).
- Staff training is needed to promote resource and cultural awareness.
- Expand the existing Site Steward Program.

D. Topic Area 4: Improve Access for All Californians (IA)

Recommendation IA 1: Expand Access to Parks in Underserved and Urban Areas

Perceived Strengths

- State Parks does not have enough exposure in key urban areas like Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. More awareness will lead to more support and, hopefully, funding for State Parks.
- State Parks has urban property that is being managed by local and regional parks departments, and it is missing an opportunity to gain the revenues those departments are currently making. Taking back control of these properties would allow State Parks to increase its revenue (note: some participants cautioned that this would be politically sensitive and questioned whether it would be worth it).

Suggested Improvements

- The Central Valley is park poor and growing fast; its residents should also have improved access to parks.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- The State Parks mission needs to be considered when addressing access for urban communities. For example, is creating parks with active recreation (ball fields, playgrounds) consistent with the State Parks mission (i.e., parks of “statewide significance”)? The natural and cultural value of urban parks needs to be considered. State Parks may need to revisit and/or update its mission to meet the needs of urban communities and stay relevant to all Californians.
- State Parks should clarify its definition of what an urban park is, and make sure that definition is consistent with the mission. State Parks might need to consider creating a new classification of parks for urban areas.
- Clarifying roles – and determining the appropriate role for State Parks – is important. State Parks could help fund and create an urban park, and then *partner* with a local or regional agency to operate the park (including holding events), which is more in the partner’s realm of expertise. For urban parks, partnering might be a better role for State Parks than leading.
- State Parks is already participating in similar partnerships with local parks departments through its State bonds grant program. State Parks needs to do a better job of increasing awareness of what it does in urban communities (better signage, marketing, education, etc.)
- State Parks should track visitation data in parks to better know its audience.

Recommendation IA 2: Remove Transportation Obstacles Impeding Broader Access to Parks

Perceived Strengths

- There was general support for removing transportation obstacles, with the caveat that the role of State Parks needs to be clarified.

Suggested Improvements

- The report needs to clarify what the challenge is and which specific parks will be focused on for this recommendation. State Parks should not be expected to improve access for all parks.
- The report should also focus on transportation within the parks, and providing information beyond just how to get to the entrance.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- It should be clear what efforts State Parks is leading and what it will be partnering on to remove transportation obstacles. State Parks should not be responsible for removing all transportation obstacles.
- Partnerships are key to improving transportation access. State Parks should collaborate with transit agencies on marketing, and better connect parks to transit routes, potentially adjusting them where it will improve access to parks. Also, a variety of potential partners (including Caltrans) have funding for transportation.
- Technology changes fast and it might be a more appropriate role for State Parks to provide data to Google or another provider and let them develop the platform.
- We need to be mindful of the digital divide when developing technology solutions. Not everyone, particularly in underserved areas, has access to smart phones.
- State Parks currently removes transportation obstacles through its Fam Camp program. This model can be expanded to other large groups like urban schools, churches, and elderly groups.

Recommendation IA 3: Support an Integrated Network of Local, Regional, State and Federal Parks Lands for Park Users

Perceived Strengths

- State Parks can provide expertise (e.g., planning, resource management, historians) and mentor staff from local and regional parks departments.
- Partnerships with public agencies tend to work well, as they have similar missions.
- Partnering with other public agencies might be an effective approach to creating new urban parks. State Parks could be involved in creating the park, and a local parks department could operate it.

Suggested Improvements

- State Parks can do a better job of collaborating with local and regional parks on events. It can leverage events at local parks to increase awareness of the State Parks system.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- It is important to have clear and complementary roles among partners. Partnerships need to be managed, and oversight is important. Communication and alignment with partners will be important.
- State Parks could develop existing land holdings to improve connections. Acquisitions could also help improve connections.
- Maintenance needs to be considered if new parks will be added.
- State Parks is already partnering with local and regional parks departments to make seamless connections (examples mentioned during the focus groups included Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, Coachella Valley Reserve, and Mono Lake).
- Integrated park networks need to have a consistent user experience and be easy to access.
- This recommendation needs to be mindful of “turf” issues.
- Each park network will be different; there should not be a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

Recommendation IA 4: Create Digital Tools, in Spanish and English, to Promote and Facilitate Parks Use

Perceived Strengths

- Incorporating digital tools is the next level of interpretation.
- The recommendation seems like an attainable goal, and it would add high value to the user experience.
- Google Trekker can also be used to support emergency and safety response.
- The user experience is key; ease of use and access to information are very important.

Suggested Improvements

- Tools should be available in languages beyond Spanish and English as there are many languages spoken in parks.
- Interpretation should also serve the hearing and visually impaired. It should be ADA accessible.
- The report should clarify “wireless in parks.” It might make sense to only make the Internet available in certain areas (kiosks, etc.).
- Having better traditional signage is also important; provide the basics.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- Technology should be a *supplement* to existing services, not a substitute. Technology may not work at some remote parks. There might be connectivity challenges. It is also important to be mindful of the digital divide.
- It is important to consider and honor the recreational experience. Some people go to parks because they want to unplug and get away from technology. State Parks should consider having designated “technology free” zones.
- Individual parks have different visitor demographics, and the approach should recognize that.
- The translation process at State Parks needs to be streamlined. Partners can help with translation and content.

Recommendation IA 5: Increase the Number and Variety of Overnight Accommodations

Perceived Strengths

- There is demand for cabins, and developing more of them across the system would help State Parks provide a wide range of options for staying in parks.
- This recommendation can help meet the needs of an aging demographic.

Suggested Improvements

- The report should clarify “near term” and “reasonably priced” with respect to cabins and lodging opportunities.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- Impacts associated with developing new cabins need to be considered, including:
 - Cabins could displace other types of lodging (camping) and the revenue streams that come with them. New structures will also add maintenance costs and responsibilities.
 - Permitting with the California Coastal Commission, ADA compliance, and CEQA all present challenges. They could make developing cabins expensive and the process time-consuming. Also, infrastructure (road, etc.) to support cabins is expensive to develop.
 - For enforcement, a cabin is a dwelling which makes it harder to manage. This could create a public safety concern.
 - There needs to be a cost-benefit analysis of adding facilities before they are created. Cabins can make or lose money depending on the location and demand. The approach needs to be well thought out.
- New structures would need to be an appropriate fit with the park.
- The Department should offer a menu of options for accommodations. This should include use of existing seasonal structures for lodging.
- Many State Parks campsites are full during peak periods, and more facilities (i.e., not just a variety of options) are needed to meet the needs of a growing population. Capacity is an important issue.
- To gain support for this recommendation, the Department needs to align cabins with the larger goal of improving access for Californians.

E. Topic Area 5: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and Communities (HL)

Recommendation HL 1: Develop and Refine Planning and Measuring Tools

Perceived Strengths

- The proposed approach of developing measurement tools will help establish a baseline against which health improvements can be measured over time.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- State Parks needs to modernize internally before developing tools with partners.
- State Parks is already effective at reaching people who want to exercise. It needs to be better at engaging people that haven't been as interested in exercise.
- State Parks needs to figure out how to better incorporate recreation into parks that were not originally designed with recreation and fitness in mind.
- Several participants noted that other organizations have done this research, and questioned whether State Parks needed to be doing it. They also questioned how well it fit with the State Parks mission.

Recommendation HL 2: Create Partnerships with Healthcare Providers to Support Projects that Encourage Healthy Behaviors

Perceived Strengths

- Linking parks to health can help make State Parks more relevant to a wider audience.
- Healthcare providers could promote the health benefits of State Parks and provide marketing and financial resources.

Suggested Improvements

- The promotion of healthy lifestyles should focus on State Parks staff as well as the general public.
- The range of partners should be broadened beyond healthcare providers (for example, the broader business community).

Considerations and Keys to Success

- State Parks should think of itself as a product that can be marketed. By changing the framing, it can make parks more relevant.
- Some partnerships are already taking place and should be leveraged as much as possible.
- Access is a challenge for users. Obtaining a permit to bring a group to park for exercise is onerous; this barrier needs to be lowered.
- Special events may be a good way to help encourage healthy behavior (it was also recognized that special events pose staffing and organizational challenges).
- A possible limitation is that healthcare providers often focus on treatment instead of prevention; they might not be appropriate partners for this reason.

Recommendation HL 3: Collaborate with Local, Regional, and National Parks to Address Health Conditions, Public Health Issues, and Health Disparities

Perceived Strengths

- Local parks departments are more focused on recreation than State Parks; they're good at this. They would make good partners.

Suggested Improvements

- Consider expanding job sharing with partnering parks. Having a blanket MOU could make this possible.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- It will be important to first understand what activities the public wants and then develop programs to address their interests.
- Build on existing programs (Office of Grants and Local Services) and reference other models around public health, including East Bay Regional Parks Department, college groups, and Oregon State Parks.
- There needs to be better collaboration within State Parks for special events. Individual parks do not collaborate or communicate regarding special events.
- State Parks needs to improve the MOUs it has with other parks; the MOU needs to be very clear about roles and expectations.
- It is important to be aware of potential conflicts of interest among partners. Not all partnerships are good; partners need to be a good fit with the State Parks mission and how it functions.

Recommendation HL 4: Expand Healthy Food Options in Parks

Perceived Strengths

- This would be a benefit for both the visiting public and parks staff.

Recommended Improvements

- The report should acknowledge that expanding healthy food options will mainly occur through agreements with concessionaires. That dynamic is not currently addressed in the report.
- Define “healthy.”

Considerations and Keys to Success

- State Parks cannot solve society’s food problem by itself, but it can play an appropriate role. For instance, State Parks could integrate healthy food into special events. State Parks could create incentives for concessionaires to offer healthy food options. It could also use food as an outreach tool. For example, Parks could host farmers markets to get people into parks and expose them to healthy food options. These approaches may need to be park specific.
- It will be more effective for State Parks to integrate healthy food into the things it already does (interpretive, etc.) than to preach about healthy food (“just do it!”). Integration is key.
- A potential barrier is that people simply may not want to eat healthy food. It might not be an appealing draw.
- The Bay Area Discovery Museum is a good model for offering healthy food.

F. Topic Area 6: Engage Youth (EY)

Recommendation EY 1: Increase Outdoor Education and Recreation Opportunities

Perceived Strengths

- Increased recreational opportunities are especially important to getting youth to come to parks for the first time.

Suggested Improvements

- The approach should include asking youth how best to engage them.
- Expand the target population to include college age youth.
- Making parks culturally relevant for youth should be better highlighted in report.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- The approach should address barriers. For example, it is difficult to hire seasonal interpretive specialists. Youth access to parks/transportation also needs to be improved. State Parks will also need additional staff to adequately address this issue.
- Partnering is key; it will be important to seek out partners that already have connections in the community.
- State Parks needs better marketing and outreach to existing youth groups.
- Build on existing programs (junior lifeguards, junior rangers, PORTs, Environmental Living Program, Environmental Studies Program, Outdoor youth connection, Off-highway Pal, Packard funded Summer Learning Program) and evaluate their effectiveness. Participants viewed the junior lifeguard program to be especially successful at increasing opportunities for engaging youth. Some recommended applying this model to the junior ranger program.
- State Parks should resurrect programs that have been cut (e.g., Adopt a School Program; living history program) that offered outdoor education and recreation opportunities.

Recommendation EY2: Recruit and Train Youth as Park Volunteers and Professionals

Perceived Strengths

- This recommendation will help bring in more young interpreters, making parks more appealing to young people (youth leading youth).
- The Support Entity could help implement this recommendation.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- Reduce barriers to bringing on interns and volunteers including contracting. The current process is onerous. Pay seasonal employees (including youth) a higher wage to make entry-level positions more appealing.
- State Parks needs to financially maintain their youth-focused programs; many successful programs fail after a short time due to lack of funding.
- State Parks should have multi-lingual staff (including youth), and provide promotional incentives for those who speak more than one language.
- Specific suggestions from participants included:
 - Revive the interpreter apprentice program where participants could receive school credit.
 - Integrate Park volunteer opportunities with school community service requirements.
 - Consider a “Take your child to work day” for State Parks employees.
 - Participate in career days and science fairs.
 - Build on the success of the junior lifeguard program, which provides recruiting opportunities.

G. Topic Area 7: Secure Stable Public Funding

Note: The topic of funding was only discussed during the June 4th Senior Staff focus group session. Senior Staff wanted to discuss funding explicitly because they viewed it as having impacts on all of the other recommendations.

Perceived Strengths

- Getting sufficient and sustainable funding is the most important priority for State Parks.

Suggested Improvements

- The funding section should be front and center in the report and include more detail. For instance, the report identifies many items that require funding but the amount of funding needed is not clear.
- The report should include a history of department funding, noting how available funds have decreased over time.
- The report needs to highlight up-front and throughout the document that parks are a public good and need to be supported through public funding. The report should better highlight how the Department has continued to protect growing public assets despite decreased funding.
- The report should be clear how small the existing Department budget is, especially in comparison to the benefit it provides to the state.
- Multi-year budgeting should be implemented.
- An appropriate State Parks fiscal target needs to be identified and established.
- Recreation is notably absent from the report, though funding from recreation is primarily keeping parks open.

Considerations and Keys to Success

- State Parks operates in unique ways, which needs to be better communicated to the legislature and public. It is hard to quantify spending.
- State Parks' reimbursable authority hampers the department. The Department cannot bring in additional funding if it is not forecast.
- State Parks needs to be able to take money from special events and apply it to other Department needs.
- State Parks does not have time to wait for new a financial/accounting system to meet its financial needs.



Appendix A – Sample Focus Group Meeting Agenda

Agenda

Parks Forward Initiative

State Parks Staff – Phase 2 Focus Group Meetings

Wednesday, May 14, 2014
 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
 Heartwell Jr. Golf Academy
 6730 E. Carson Street, Long Beach, CA

Objective

- Reflect and provide feedback on current recommendations being considered by the Parks Forward Commission on the following topics:
 - Build an effective Department of Parks and Recreation
 - Create a new organization to support Parks
 - Protect natural and cultural resources
 - Improve access for all Californians
 - Promote healthy lifestyles and communities
 - Engage youth
- Build State Parks staff capacity, leadership, commitment, and participation around eventual implementation of Parks Forward Commission recommendations.

Agenda

Time	Topic	Presenter(s)
10:00 a.m.	Welcome and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of meeting objectives and agenda • Background – development of draft recommendations • Introductions • Ground rules • Introduce breakout sessions • Clarifying questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedrick Mitchell, State Parks Deputy Director of External Affairs • Ken Wiseman, PFI Executive Director • Facilitator
10:30 a.m.	Breakout Session 1: Provide feedback on PFI recommendations under consideration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 1: “Protect natural and cultural resources” • Group 2: “Improve access for all Californians” • Group 3: “Promote healthy lifestyles and communities” & “Engage youth” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakout groups
12:00 p.m.	Reports back from Breakout Session 1 and discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakout session participants • Facilitator
12:30 p.m.	<i>Break for lunch (provided)</i>	

Time	Topic	Presenter(s)
1:00 p.m.	Breakout Session 2: Provide feedback on PFI recommendations under consideration (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups 4, 5, 6: all focused on “Build an effective Department” & “Create new organization to support Parks” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakout groups
3:00 p.m.	<i>Break</i>	
3:15 p.m.	Reports back from Breakout Session 2 and discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakout session participants • Facilitator
3:45 p.m.	Wrap-up, next steps, and closing remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedrick Mitchell • Ken Wiseman • Facilitator
4:00 p.m.	<i>Adjourn</i>	

Appendix B – Wall Chart Notes from June 4th Senior Staff Session

What follows is a transcription of the wall chart notes taken by facilitators during the Senior Staff focus group session. The wall chart notes identify key comments provided by focus group participants.

Topic Area 1: Building an Effective Department of Parks and Recreation

ED1: Align and Modernize Technology and Accounting Systems

- Restructure system to account for the right things (and how the districts operate)
 - Focus on areas, not individual parks/units
- Need alignment of operational and budgeting units
- Too many “touches” for bill paying and accounting, need to streamline/modernize (paperless)
- Balance between technologies and being simplistic in remote areas (need flexibility)
- HQ and district accounting needs to be more seamless → same language
- Accounting should have multiple “lenses” (obligated, allocated, etc.)
- Visitor tracking
 - Need to modernize
 - Also address lag in tracking/analyzing
- Department fear of technology and lack of awareness of what other districts are doing
 - Need inventory of what exists
- Address general lag time between getting data and taking action
- Update tools to measure effectiveness
- Constrained by single-year budget
 - Partnership can help
- Partners/concessionaires need to modernize too/be accountable
- Opportunity to capture satisfaction of visitors
 - Can provide context
- Improve delivery of info and communication internally
- Budget ends in middle of season, continuous appropriations needed in long-term

ED2: Align and Modernize Leadership and Staffing

- Department should create management structure, not just field management
 - Need to look at equity across department
- Alignment between position and pay → equity
 - Might need new classifications\
 - Might be bigger than badge vs. non-badge
- Problem → cannot fill positions with qualified people
 - Partners can help
 - Add to reports, should go beyond just badge issue
- Need to increase pay, especially for lower classifications
- Hampered by civil service system and collective bargaining
- Bring back exam and training units
- State service has 3 ranks, better process for hiring than state parks
- Better prepare people for exams
- 2 bullets in conflict
- Non-peace officer manager is a good idea (chief ranger)

- Staff needs to be more diverse
 - Bring back recruiters, needs to be funded
- Avoid badge vs. non-badge
 - Most qualified (develop criteria for this)
- Need to be able to forecast personnel, needs to have training in place to fill and funding
 - Beyond one year
- Acknowledge what is already happening
- Public safety directly related to customer service
- Identify criteria for managers and make flexible/inappropriate
- Compaction is a problem
- Need classification for managing partnerships
- Vacancy rate prevents rangers from working in other core areas
- New manager classification should be generalist
- Broaden view of personnel
- Need engaged personnel division
- Multi-disciplinary “cross-training”
 - Happening in some divisions, should be applied broadly
- Align staffing levels with mission
 - What do we want to be, and what do we need?

ED3: Facilitate and Support Effective Partnerships

- Need to use common language with partners
- Be clear about role of partnerships vs. role of department
 - Concern about delegation of too much authority, about too much influence on overall department decision-making
- Ensure that partners consider goals and mission of department overall
 - Not too focused on particular agenda of the partner
- Report much too simplistic about partnerships
- Take into consideration how much staff time and resources are involved with managing partners
- Partners should play “value add” role
 - And in special cases, help with functions such as hiring temp workers before government hire
- Concern that concessionaires take in money that does not go back into park benefit/maintenance
- Build on department successes with partnerships (e.g. Cooperation Association)
- Instead of heavy focus on partnerships, focus on parks being a public resource that should have greater funding/management through department
- Clarify what the “barriers” are regarding partnerships
- Conduct analysis of resources drawn from department by approaches such as passes
- Focus on all partners, not just those formed around closures
- Concern with comment that “department’s role must change from ‘direct provider’...” → interest in having department maintain on-the-ground knowledge and role
- More clearly articulate types of partnerships desired
- Beware handing department off to private interests
- Define/clarify ability to end partnerships if they are not working

ED4: Align and Modernize Governance

- This may not be an issue worth focusing on

- Commissions do not have much authority
- Too many issues within each commission to be able to combine commissions
- Focus should be on duplication of oversight, not combination of commissions
- Combining could result in local public feeling a loss of transparency
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities of commissions
- Need standardized model for commissions
- Consider governance issues both within and external to department

ED5: Ensure Successful Implementation by Investing in Expertise and Providing Authority to Achieve Alignment and Modernization

- Secure total buy-in from department to increase likelihood/success of implementation (rather than seeking help from an external group)
- Frame as a transition team with a defined scope and timeline
- Recommend convening this group annually to review and push for further implementation
 - Or internal multi-disciplinary group
- Concern about an additional layer of authority and bureaucracy
- Using existing, experienced staff will be much more effective
 - Overwhelming comments that this can and should be handled with an internal group and some additional authority

General/Additional Comments

- Consider how to improve efficiencies and where support is needed (2 buckets)
- Already doing the recs.
- State parks operate uniquely, need to communicate to legislature/others
 - Spending, etc. (hard to quantify)
- Hiring needs to be more efficient
- More funding and staff needed
- Clarify which efficiencies state parks can control vs. cannot control
- “efficient” a dangerous word for public agencies, not a good fit
 - Economize where possible
- Funding needs: need people to be able to modernize and be able to implement report
- Need to improve marketing, presence in field; build relationships and partners
- Tone of report is divisive
 - Should focus more on improvements
- Language- report should consider what state parks can do and what laws would need to/should change
- Report focus → remove negative aspects to increase credibility of department
- Open report with positive, passionate statement about parks and what parks do for California
- Possible to decrease scope of coastal commission? Creates significant barriers for Parks Department
 - Or → funding for person to work at coastal commission to process permit applications for department

Topic Area 2: Create New Organization to Support Parks

NO1: Strategic Planning and Coordination

- Strategic advocacy

- Lobbying to reduce barriers
- State parks cannot do this

NO2: Enterprise Functions

- Good fit

NO3: Fundraising and Financing Solutions

- Good fit
- Fund deferred maintenance
- Need to clarify what they are raising money for

NO4: Communications, Marketing, and Digital Information and Tools

- Strategic communications.
- Public relations better fit than marketing (more for-profit)
- State parks do/can do this with staff and resources

NO5: Land Acquisition

- NOT a good fit

NO6: Organizational Capacity and Effectiveness

- [no comments]

General/Additional Comments

- Rather than create new organization, fix department
- Importance of shared vision, purpose, and trust
- Concern about conflict with State Park Foundation and public confusion
- Need assurances entity will support department needs in the long run
- Need to address issues that aren't sexy (permitting, infrastructure, maintenance)
- Needs to work for entire system
- State Park Foundation → damaged relationship
- Relationships critical → challenge for statewide level
- Think beyond the State Park Foundation → what do we want/need?
- Clarify model being considered (NPS, NFWF, etc.)
 - The model matters!
- State parks (or legislation) should define niche that needs to be filled
- Define role of State Parks Foundation and see how that works/how received
- Narrow focus/role of entity
- State park does this, do we need another organization?
 - Need more staff
- Entity needs to be accountable; protect public goods/interest

Topic Area 3: Funding

- Most important issue, yet last in report. Should be addressed up front!
- Need sustainable and sufficient funding
- Reimbursable authority hampers department → cannot bring in additional funding if not forecast
- Need to be clear how small existing department budget is, especially in comparison to scope of benefit provided to state

- Need to identify and establish an appropriate fiscal target
- Need to highlight up front and throughout that parks are a public good and need to be supported
- Need ability to take money from special events and apply it to department needs
- Report identifies many items that require money but budget, amount of money needed is not clear
- Add history of department funding to report → demonstrate how available funds match up with status, ups and downs of park management
- Ask for 5-year budgeting
- Recreation is notably absent from the report, and most of recreation money is keeping parks open
- Do not have time to wait for new financial/accounting system to ascertain financial needs
- Better address how department is continuing to protect public assets that have been built over the decades, while continuing to meet additional needs (e.g., ADA)