

**Parks Forward Initiative**  
Joint Staff Working DRAFT Outline

1. **Executive Summary** (3-4 pages)

*This section will provide a summary of the key components of the Plan, including the Commission's charge and process, the risks of failing to take action, a vision for future California parks, and key recommendations for attaining that vision.*

2. **History of Excellence** (2-3 pages)

a. **History of Leadership and Innovation**

*This section will describe the long, innovative history of State Parks, beginning with President Lincoln's signing of the land grant in Yosemite Valley 150 years ago creating the nation's first state park, and through subsequent periods of modernization and strategic expansion supported by Californians even during challenging economic times. The discussion will focus on connections with the national park system, California's key parks leaders, dealing with challenges, and periods of system invention. The section will provide a foundation for the vision described in section 4.*

b. **California's World-Class Parks**

*This section will describe the key attributes of California parks today, focusing on quantitative markers (number of parks, acres, locations, natural and cultural resource assets, etc.), connections with other parks and protected lands, and broader qualitative attributes and impacts on the state and local economies and livable communities. This section will also connect California's parks to those characteristics that are unique to Californians and California's role as a leader in areas, including business, technology, outdoor recreation, healthy lifestyles, local food movement, and cultural diversity and demographic trends.*

3. **Challenges, Parks Forward Initiative, and Initial Findings** (3-4 pages)

a. **Analyses and State Response to Growing Crisis**

*This section will describe: (i) the 2012 parks closure crisis as response to significant budget cuts and inconsistent funding faced by the Department of Parks and Recreation; (ii) key take-away messages on the crisis from various reports, including, for example, (A) the California Legislative Analyst's recognition of the "inherent trade-offs" associated with various cost-cutting and revenue-generation options, (B) the Little Hoover Commission's conclusion that the*

*California state parks model is obsolete, calling instead for adoption of “a new operating model built around shared management, innovation, greater transparency” and increasing revenue, cite other key reports including the Phoenix Report, the Excellence Report describing the same themes that are challenges for the Department today; and (iii) the legislative mandate called for in the California State Parks Stewardship Act and AB 1478 to conduct an independent assessment of State Parks and make recommendations on how to ensure the long-term sustainability of the system.*

**b. Parks Forward Initiative Design**

*This section will describe how prominent California charitable foundations came together in the face of the closure and budget crisis to provide support for charting a new course for State Parks that protects the natural and cultural resources, meets the future needs of the state, and is financially stable. The discussion will describe the independent Parks Forward Commission, including the memorandum of understanding among the California Resources Agency, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the nonprofit Resources Legacy Fund, as well as the charge and make-up of the Parks Forward Commission.*

**c. Parks Forward Initiative Process**

*This section will describe the Initiative’s process for assessing problems, engaging the public and Department of Parks and Recreation, and crafting recommendations including use of State and private experts, a staff survey and focus groups, interviews, meetings, intranet, public workshops, public meetings, webcasting, work groups, website, social media, etc.*

**d. Parks Forward Commission Initial Findings**

**i. An Imperiled Legacy**

*This section will describe the challenges facing State Parks, limitations of the current system and structure, and consequences of failing to take action including harm to natural and cultural resources, lost economic, health, and cultural opportunities, as well as consequences of failing to adapt to California’s changing demographics, physical environment, and needs of its citizens. It will note the Commission’s primary aim is to ensure that the recommendations are effective at producing the fundamental change that has eluded prior efforts. The challenge is two-fold: steering the operational turnaround of a beleaguered department in the near term while setting a long-term sustainable vision for the next 150 years.*

## **ii. A Need for Fundamental Change**

*This section will describe the Commission's conclusion that: 1) fundamental change is needed; modest improvements will not meet current challenges, let alone future needs; 2) some changes can occur quickly, but others will require more time to implement; 3) must provide access to parks for all Californians which means eliminating institutional barriers and creating a network of California parks; 4) the Department of Parks and Recreation should provide leadership within this broader California parks network and focus on core competencies; 5) improve capacity within the Department; 6) create and expand effective partnerships and cooperating agreements; 7) engage youth; and 8) seek secure, stable funding to acquire, restore, and steward this network of protected lands and assets to enrich access to parks for all Californians and build healthy communities, strong local economies, opportunities for youth, and a link to the history and culture that make California unique. This new direction will require the collective action and commitment of state leaders, the Department, traditional and new parks partners, and new and broader coalitions of engaged Californians.*

## **4. California Parks' Future (4-6 pages)**

*This section will describe the major themes of Commission's vision for California's parks and the Department, and will serve as the bridge between the fundamental change discussion of section 3 and the specific recommendations set out in section 5. The vision is dynamic, connecting California's broad network of parks and protected lands with California's changing needs and people. This future vision will include the following components and key long-term metrics of success.*

### **a. Natural Resources, Iconic Landscapes, Rich History, and Diverse Culture Are Protected and Valued**

*Focus on the need to manage and steward natural and cultural resources across regions and jurisdictions to ensure long-term protection of assets that can play a vital role in the lives of Californians and the success of the state.*

### **b. All Californians Have Access to a Network of Parks**

*Focus on the need to improve access, particularly for urban and park poor communities and include improved transportation options (e.g., bike and public transit), and providing park services and amenities that are relevant to the needs of all Californians.*

**c. Parks Promote Healthy, Active Lifestyles and Communities**

*Focus on how parks can play a vital role in providing daily opportunities for improving health of all Californians, providing families with opportunities to enjoy vacation and destination experiences, and providing communities opportunities to build safe places to come together.*

**d. Youth are Actively Engaged in Parks**

*Focus on better connecting youth to the outdoors to build new parks supporters, users, thinkers, and professionals to guide parks in the future.*

**e. The California Department of Parks and Recreation is Capable, Effective, Focused, and Adequately Funded**

*Focus on the role the Department can play in bringing this new parks vision to California, which is dependent on changes and related improvements to Department structure, authorities, systems, and processes.*

**5. Charting a New Course (10-12 pages)**

*This section will set forth the specific recommendations for advancing each of the components of the new vision captured in Chapter 4. Following outlines some preliminary indicative recommendations that are subject to change and further refinement.*

**a. Protect Natural and Cultural Resources**

*This section will describe means of ensuring protection of park assets by expanding the state's capacity to steward and restore, pursuing science-based best management practices, research, and educational programs, and developing adaptive reuse for appropriate historic sites.*

**b. Provide Access to a Seamless Network of Parks**

*This section will describe means of improving access to parks, connectivity between parks, communications tools to facilitate park use, and amenities (including additional overnight accommodations).*

**c. Promote Healthy Lifestyles and Communities**

*This section will describe means of expanding recreational opportunities, access to healthy food, partnerships with healthcare providers, and special events.*

**d. Engage Youth**

*This section will describe means of increasing recreational and educational, volunteer, and employment opportunities.*

**e. Build an Effective and Efficient Department**

*This section will describe the means of prioritizing primary duties, modernizing management structure and processes, restoring financial accountability and credibility, providing training, tools, and incentives to empower staff and encourage innovation and achievement of the Department's new role.*

**f. Secure Stable Sources of Public Funding**

*This section will describe the options, potential amounts, and considerations for supplementing revenue generation, general fund, and other support with additional stable sources of public funding.*

**g. Enhance Capacity of Park Support Organizations**

*This section will identify new or expanded capacity, tools, or support for entities to support California parks.*

**6. Implementation (6-8 pages)**

*This section will set forth the changes to processes, funding, laws, structures, governance, and policy to support the recommendations. Because there are both near and long term tasks, implementation will proceed in phases. And, in some cases, substantial work remains to be done to create detailed implementation plans. While all recommendations will identify next steps, timing, roles of agencies, partners, and stakeholders, some will be less detailed pending the outcome of further work.*

**7. Conclusion (1-2 pages)**

*This section will summarize the key themes, highlight critical next steps, emphasize the need to act now, and call state leaders, the department, stakeholders, and the public to action.*