

Parks Forward Staff Note: This summary was created by professional consultants Kearns & West based upon three public workshops conducted in May and June of 2014. The intent of the workshops was to 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 department staff (including through the May/June 2014 focus groups), Park partners, and other stakeholders.

Executive Summary

Summary Findings from Parks Forward Initiative May/June 2014 Public Workshops

This document summarizes findings from three public workshops conducted throughout California in May and June 2014. The workshops were convened by the Parks Forward Initiative (PFI). The purpose of the workshops was to update the public on the PFI and to receive input on draft recommendations in the [April 23, 2014 Staff Working Draft Report](#) being considered by the Parks Forward Commission.

Comments received in the workshops were generally supportive of the recommendations in the report, although participants also offered a wide variety of clarifications, concerns, and suggested improvements. The following highlights some of the major findings that emerged across all three workshops (listed in no particular order):

- **Level of Detail and Focus on Implementation:** Many of the public workshop participants thought the report lacked sufficient detail in some of the recommendation topics. They wanted or were expecting to see specific proposed actions rather than general approaches. Many also wanted to see more emphasis on how the recommendations would be implemented. They warned against the report being yet another government product that “sits on a shelf.”
- **Clarity:** Participants noted that the *Staff Working Draft Report* lacked clarity in several areas. Several referred to the lack of definition around key themes, such as “partnerships”, “support entity”, and the “office of operational effectiveness.” A few also expressed concern about the report’s reference to the need to “lower barriers”; these individuals wanted to confirm that lowering barriers would not mean lowering standards.
- **Partnerships:** Many participants expressed appreciation for the report’s emphasis on partnerships and the many benefits they provide to State Parks, including program implementation, park maintenance, and revenue generation. Participants supported enhancing existing partnerships and beginning new partnerships, but cautioned that the report should better define how partnerships be managed. They also noted that in developing partnerships with State Parks, there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. Overall, they emphasized that State Parks should strive for partnerships that are both effective and equitable.
- **Interconnectedness of Recommendation Topic Areas:** Participants acknowledged the interconnectedness of the different recommendations in the report; many noted the importance of maintaining appropriate balance among them. For instance, the Department cannot engage youth and promote healthy lifestyles without improving access to parks, just as it cannot improve access without multiple sources of public and private funding. At the same time, participants acknowledged that increasing attendance in state parks may place additional stress on natural and cultural resources. Overall, participants wanted to confirm that changes made in one topic area would not result in negative impacts on others.
- **Support Entity:** Participants expressed a wide variety of views on the proposed new Support Entity. Some acknowledged that a Support Entity could be helpful to the Department. Others thought that the Support Entity should focus on filling gaps instead of duplicating functions already covered by the Department or its many existing partners. Participants generally wanted to ensure that the new Support Entity does not overlap or compete with park partners and that it will not add an additional level of bureaucracy.

- **Funding:** Almost all participants who addressed the funding topic agreed that multiple sources of public and private funds are needed to support State Parks. Participants also provided a variety of suggestions for how to generate revenue and ensure sustainable funding into the future. These participants wanted to see more detail on this subject in the report.