

Public Announcement from Disability Rights Advocates regarding California State Park Closures

On May 13, 2011, California State Parks announced a plan to close up to 70 of its 278 parks due to budget cuts. According to the California State Park announcement, “the closures are necessary to achieve an \$11 million reduction in the next fiscal year 2011/12, that amount increasing to \$22 million in the following fiscal year 2012/13.” The announcement can be found here: <http://www.parks.ca.gov>.

Three primary goals offered for developing the closure methodology include protecting “the most significant natural and cultural resources,” maintaining “public access and revenue generation to the greatest extent possible,” and protecting “closed parks so that they remain attractive and usable for potential partners.”

The closure plan is subject to change. In addition, the State Parks has emphasized to Disability Rights Advocates (“DRA”) that it is committed to minimizing impacts to accessible park features to the extent possible. In some cases, the current closure plan may entail suspending park services at selected parks while keeping these parks open to public access – i.e., the public will be allowed on the park grounds, but there will be no services provided. These service closures will mean that (e.g.) bathrooms are locked, park patrol will cease, water will be shut off, etc.

These service closures will likely impact the usability of the accessibility features in the affected parks. DRA is working with the Accessibility Section of the California State Parks to ensure that information is made readily available to the public concerning such impacts. The website for the California State Parks currently has a separate page for each park unit discussing accessibility features available in the unit. DRA has requested that these accessibility pages for the parks that will be subjected to service closures be updated to list the specific impact of the service closures on accessibility features. The State Park system is considering this request. In addition, DRA has requested that the accessibility pages for the affected park units provide a contact number to the California State Park’s Disability Access Section, including email, phone number (a direct line to the section) and mailing address, to field questions from members of the community.

For further information, please contact: Larry Paradis at lparadis@dralegal.org