



December 21, 2009

Parks Talk!

Forward this issue to your email address book today!

In this issue...

- **URGENT CALL TO ACTION!**
- **State Parks on its Deathbed**
- **Your Voice Needed Now!**
- **Governor's Task Force on Sustainable State Parks**
- **Keep Parks Open By Visiting**

Your Voice Needed Now!

Tell your Arizona Legislators TODAY that budgetary cuts to Arizona State Parks will hurt Arizona's communities and economy.

Link here to [talking points](#), [sample letter](#) and contacts in the Arizona [Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#).

[Governor's Task Force on Sustainable State Parks makes recommendation](#)

Task Force recommends a vehicle license fee of \$14-\$15 annually from non-commercial vehicle owners to fund Arizona State Parks. Private vehicles with AZ license plates would enjoy free admission to Arizona State Parks.

See ASU's Morrison Institute for Public Policy report "[The Price of Stewardship: The Future of Arizona's State Parks](#)"

Visit a State Park This Weekend!



[Douglas Mansion at Jerome State Historic Park, Jerome, AZ](#)

**P.O. Box 4216, Phoenix, Arizona 85030-4217
(602) 920-4505**

**azstateparksfnd@yahoo.com
www.arizonastateparksfoundation.org**

URGENT CALL TO ACTION!

The Arizona State Legislature has acted on House Bill 2001. It eliminates the ability for the Arizona State Parks system to operate. All parks will close as a result of this action. If you or your children wish to ever visit such extraordinary places like Kartchner Caverns State Park, Tonto Natural Bridge State Park, or Tubac Presidio State Historic Park, you must act today. It is our last hope.

Call, email or write ([Sample Letter](#)) Governor Jan Brewer and urge her to veto the parks cuts listed in the article below.

Phone: 602-542-4331 or 800-253-0883

Email via Governor's Contact page at: www.governor.state.az.us/Contact.asp

Mail Sample Letter to:

The Honorable Jan Brewer
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Arizona State Parks; A System on its Deathbed

Without the Legislature's help in securing immediate additional revenues for Arizona State Parks, the current FY10 budget will force closure of virtually all state parks, shutting a system that serves more than two million visitors annually, while depriving local communities of some \$266 million a year in parks-related income.

The cuts proposed in House Bill 2001 of the 5th Special Session of the 49th Arizona Legislature are catastrophic to Arizona State Parks. Fund Reductions and Transfers totaling \$3,151,100, coupled with Fund Sweeps of \$6,088,700 will eliminate the agency's ability to operate.

The Legislature is seeking \$205 million in cuts to begin to address a deficit currently estimated at \$1.5 billion. The proposed cuts to State Parks would equate to 5% of their solution, while State Parks currently receives less than 1/10 of 1% of the overall state budget. Additionally, State Parks receives NO money from the state General Fund, but the positive impact of the park system on the state economy is more than \$266 million. \$22.7 million of that total is collected for state and local taxes. To be clear, the State Park system generates \$22.7 million in state and local taxes when parks are open, but receives NO funding from the Arizona State Legislature from that revenue source.

Arizona State Parks rely on gate fees to operate. Take time this weekend with holiday visitors to explore one of our exceptional [Arizona State Parks!](#)

Arizona State Parks Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2004 to serve as a key partner to Arizona State Parks. For more information on ASPF, visit:
www.arizonastateparksfoundation.org

The proposed cuts would force significant reductions in staff, thereby forcing a closure of much of the park system in this fiscal year. Without the revenues that the open parks generate, the agency will be forced to dispose of much of the property that it currently manages.

Some of the most problematic cuts include:

- \$2,302,100 in reductions and sweeps to the Enhancement Fund, the agency's principle operating budget, will force reductions in approximately 75 staff and the closure of more than half of the parks. The resulting loss in revenue will result in a zero balance to begin the next fiscal year (July 2010).
- \$1,915,800 in reductions and sweeps to the State Lake Improvement Fund is more than the projected ending cash balance available. These cuts would make it impossible to operate the parks along the Colorado River.
- \$3,909,400 in reductions and sweeps to the Arizona Heritage Fund will imperil funding for critical State Parks capital projects (including a water line for fire suppression at Lake Havasu State Park and the extension of Benson water line necessary for the long-term health of Kartchner Caverns), and grants currently under contract.

To avoid this disaster, somewhere between \$18 million and \$22 million must be restored to State Parks – an amount accounting for about 1/10th of 1% of the state's overall budget. Not to provide such modest funding will effectively wipe out more than 50 years of taxpayer investment in buying, building and opening such heavily-visited places as Kartchner Caverns; Havasu and Alamo lakes and on the state's west side; Slide Rock, Red Rock and Dead Horse Ranch state parks in northern Arizona; and Catalina, Oracle and Patagonia Lake state parks in southeast Arizona to name a few.

The Legislature's strategy of granting State Parks limited authority to "backfill" its losses by skimming funds from voter-approved Heritage Fund monies, State Lake Improvement Funds and other special sources is no solution. None of these can provide what is needed to sustain Arizona's parks, some of which could revert to the federal government or original private owners if they are closed or not used.

If past Legislatures could keep parks open to Arizonans through 50 years of prior downturns, wars, gas crises and political turmoil, surely current lawmakers can find the revenues to do so – especially given the great economic value, popularity and intrinsic worth of our state parks.