



The Long and Short of It – DM Peterson

California State Parks R.I.P. 1864-2012

By now you have probably heard that many California State Parks are once again on the chopping-block. While it would be an exaggeration to say that the entire system is slated to be scrapped, it is a fact that over seventy parks in northern California alone may be shuttered before the end of 2012, perhaps sooner!

The California State Park system pre-dates the National Park system. Yosemite was the first State Park before Yellowstone was the first National Park. Later of course Yosemite became a National Park. There are state parks in California that would be *National Parks* in 45 out of 50 states.

How the mighty have fallen. Although the California economy ranks seventh in the world we can't even pay our own bills. Everybody wants to keep their share of the pie. God forbid we should work for the greater good and pool our resources. Everybody wants everyone else to pay.

Last year voters had a chance and failed to fund the parks and all they had to do was pay an extra \$10 a year in DMV fees. You can't even watch a movie for \$10 and it will get you little more than two gallons of gas.

And with the parks teetering on the verge of extinction you still see tons of cars parked on Channel drive, Howarth Park and in the adjoining neighborhoods so that people can walk or run into the park for free. Some of these folks of course have purchased parking passes in support of the park but more on that in a bit...

So now the chickens are coming home to roost.

People say they won't be able to keep people out of the park. That much is probably true, but imagine how bad the trails will look with no maintenance. Imagine too the free reign rogue mountain bikers will have to cut their own trails, build obstacles and otherwise reek havoc. With no regular patrols you might stumble across a pot garden when you are on your illegal five-miler and find a shotgun pointed in your direction. And while it has never been a great idea for women to run alone in the park, it will become even more dangerous should their no longer be a law enforcement presence in the park. It is not a pretty picture.

There are good things brewing however and the future may not be as bleak as it first appears.

Various efforts are underway for volunteer groups to patrol and maintain the park in the event of a complete or partial closure. Large sums of money have been raised once again via the Annadel Half Marathon. You can and should go to Save Our State Parks online at <http://savestateparks.org/> and get involved. And it is always a good idea to buy an annual parks pass. If everybody bought one a couple of years ago when this first came up, and continued to do so, this would be a non-issue!



County Parks need Love Too

Think you will just run at Spring Lake if they close Annadel? Think again. With the state nearly bankrupt it won't be long until Sacramento bleeds the cities and counties dry and then we will be looking at closing our wonderful Sonoma Co. Regional Parks too.

Buy a Regional Parks pass and avoid using the park for "free". Start paying your way unless you are prepared to do all your running in town and on asphalt.

To buy a Regional Parks Pass go to: https://sonomacountycamping.org/pass_sales.asp

Howarth Park Charging Entrance Fees?

Not to be left out, the Santa Rosa City Council has threatened to invoke parking fees at Howarth park. If they do I can't say that I blame them and given the choice between closure and paying a fee, I will happily pay to park or to buy an annual pass should they be offered.

And... in the End

When it is all said and done. No matter what happens I have to believe that the parks will be saved. There may be a time of trial to endure but eventually they will be saved.

When they are it will be thanks to the effort of the people who cared enough to give just a little bit of their time, their money and their creativity. If you find the opportunity to help directly or indirectly just do it.

Don't give up the park(s) without a fight!