

MOONLETTER



VALLEY OF THE MOON NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2011

NEW VISIONS TO SAVE OUR VALLEY'S THREE STATE PARKS

Re-imagining the operation of Annadel, Sugarloaf and Jack London State Parks

Close to Home: Remember When Parks Were Forever?

Welcome to the "all-cuts budget."

If you weren't shocked by the promised *permanent* closure of 70 State Parks, then maybe you've given up on our elected leaders. Over the last 30 years they have systematically neglected and starved State Parks into worse than caretaker status while increasing deferred maintenance to \$1.2 billion dollars. Didn't we entrust these public servants with our irreplaceable heritage parks with the expectation that they would preserve them in perpetuity?

Turns out forever isn't very long. In 1971 tax-paying citizens and public agencies working together inspirationally raised \$5 million to buy the 5000 acres we call Annadel State Park. We did so with the understanding that we would not be barred access due to legislative negligence.

Also closing are Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, home to wilderness camping and the awesome Ferguson Observatory, and Jack London State Historic Park, with its monumental Wolf House ruins. Who knew how insignificant the internationally famous author's unique legacy was to the State of California? What exactly do officials plan to do with the park's 10,000 precious artifacts? Pack them off to Sacramento, never to be viewed again? Let Sotheby's auction them off?

Where do we go from here? Is there nothing left for these "non-essential" parks but subdivisions or privatization? Protected parklands are not designed to

make money. Even concessionaires find it tough to turn a profit in State Parks. Landpaths and the Open Space District are already over-laden with acreage like Willow Creek and Calabazas Creek that they hope park agencies will someday take over with tax-supported funding and staffing. Educational, all volunteer non-profits like the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association don't presently have the funds or paid executive staff to operate parks. (*Full disclosure:* This group supports the three above-mentioned parks that are about to be shut down, and I am currently its president.) Without passing Assemblyman Huffman's proposed new law, raising money for park operations would violate our non-profit charter. It would also turn us into entrepreneurs staging fundraisers targeting mega-donors. If you think ballot box budgeting is a bad idea, just how many Russian billionaires like the one who saved Fort Ross do you think we can count on popping out of a hat? Because of the limitations of homegrown non-profits, strange hybrids (think HMOs) are likely to spring up when those 70 park-quality properties suddenly hit the market. Groups affiliated with KOA-like companies would have to crowd in a few more campsites and possibly introduce our Sugarloaf Ridge campers to miniature golf to make ends meet.

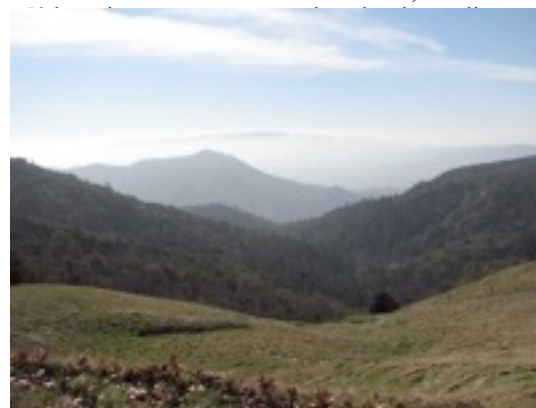
A stinging irony of the announced closures is that the bulk of them are in areas that approved the November ballot initiative to fund State Parks with vehicle registration fees. In Southern California, where the measure failed, few parks are closing. But our neighbors to the south should not feel overly secure. Saving the state's general fund \$23 million will not make a dent in the billion dollar maintenance backlog that

threatens to sink the entire park system. Inevitably, unless a better solution is found, the next list of closures will include their favorites too, the ones they thought they had already paid for and been promised access to forever.

So what's a better solution than magic billionaires and privatization? Ask your legislator, ask your governor. We elected them because they said they had the answers. Demand that they find \$23 million somewhere else in the \$85 billion budget to keep all the State Parks open. And failing that, demand that they at least not auction off a quarter of them to the highest bidder.

---Greg Hayes worked at Jack London, Sugarloaf Ridge and Annadel State Parks as a ranger for twenty-five years. He has spent the past seven years volunteering for the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association, which is accepting tax-deductible donations to help stave off closure of our three local state parks: 2400 London Ranch Road, Glen Ellen, CA 95442. Online at: jacklondonpark.com.

SUGARLOAF RIDGE STATE PARK, below



HOW TO HELP RE-OPEN OUR CLOSED STATE PARKS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

With voter rejection of Proposition 21 (State Parks Funding Initiative) and the announced closure of 70 state parks (25% of the entire state park system), it is now obvious to everyone that we *don't* get what we *don't* pay for! As unfortunate and painful as this situation is, there are ways that Californians can hasten the day when all, or at least some, of the closed parks will be able to re-open.

Most importantly, people who use the facilities of state parks need to pay for the experience. Funding from the State's General Fund now only covers less than half of the expenses needed to operate our state parks. To cope with budget cuts initiated last year, many state parks are now partially closed because of staffing cuts, and maintenance of trails and buildings is being deferred. A majority of state park funding now needs to come from entry/camping fees, boat launch fees, income from park concessionaires, revenue from annual park passes, and donations. It is a sad fact that many people who make frequent use of our state parks still try to avoid paying the entry fees by parking their car outside of the park gate and then walk in without paying – or bypass the “iron ranger” without depositing the use fee in the envelope. When people try to use park resources for free, they are depriving the system of revenue needed to maintain park infrastructure and park safety.

This LETTER and ACTION LIST was sent to all our local newspapers by RICHARD ARENDT, President of Sonoma/Petaluma State Parks Association

ACTIONS THAT WE CAN TAKE

1. Buy an Annual Vehicle Day Use Pass on-line at www.parks.ca.gov. The cost is \$125 a year for the statewide Annual Vehicle Day Use Pass, or \$90 a year for the Golden Poppy Day Use Pass (valid in 97 parks).
2. If you are an infrequent user of state parks, please pay the day use fee every time that you visit.
3. Become a member of the various non-profit organizations that support state parks. Two local park associations are: Sonoma/Petaluma State Historic Parks Association (www.sonomaparks.org) which supports the Sonoma State Historic Park and the Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park, and the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association (www.jacklondonpark.com), which supports the Jack London, Sugarloaf Ridge and Annadel state parks.
4. Become a member of the California State Parks Foundation (www.calparks.org) which is the main lobbying group for state parks in Sacramento.
5. Become a volunteer or docent with your local state park or with local open-space organizations such as LandPaths in Santa Rosa (www.landpaths.org).



ANNADEL STATE PARK, above slated for closure, 40th anniversary this year

LandPaths Weighs In...

We are an independent non profit with a focus on education, public access, and land stewardship currently helping State Parks by managing access and stewardship at the Willow Creek addition to Sonoma Coast State Park. County-wide we manage access to over 6,000 acres of land that would otherwise be closed.

Fortunately, we now have a staff of 14, hundreds of active volunteers, and scores of fantastic partner orgs-- we do not consider ourselves overburdened with our current projects. The number of parks, farms and open spaces in need of care is indeed daunting, but LandPaths will continue to focus on our current projects and lend support where we can. We also do indeed hope for (and continue to work for) a fully funded park system. However, after 14 years providing “interim” access and care for our local park districts, we are also realists. We believe strongly in the power of community investment (ie. volunteer time, \$\$, labor, etc.) – both as armor against the budget ax today, and as an important supplement to fully funded professional park administrators.

Our primary message is this one of working with our park system – not to replace or “privatize”, but to engage the public (especially the next generation) so that they will continue to advocate for land protection, public access, land stewardship, and a recognition of the importance and relevance of these gems to everyone in our communities.

Jonathon Glass, Field Programs Director
LandPaths
Learn more at www.landpaths.org

OUTSOURCING OUR PARKS

A LOOK AT AB 42, A BILL DESIGNED TO FILL THE GAP by Chuck Levine

Assemblyman Jared Huffman submitted a bill to the California General Assembly (AB 42) focused on enabling the parks to continue operations by enabling nonprofit organizations to operate them for a period of up to ten years.

This bill passed the House with a 69-0 vote and would authorize the Department of Parks and Recreation to enter into an operating agreement for the “development, improvement, restoration, care, maintenance, administration, or operation” with a qualified nonprofit organization to facilitate public access to parks.

The bill recognizes that, “The budget for the state park system has not kept pace with the state's population growth and growing demand. The annual budget for state parks has been significantly below the amount necessary to maintain the parks in their current condition. The ongoing shortfall

has caused a burgeoning backlog of deferred maintenance of over \$1.3 billion in 2010, inadequate staff to protect park resources and maintain public access and safety, and partial closures of many state parks.” Moreover, as a result of the current budget crisis, “Current budget resources will force the closure of state parks throughout the system...”

Assemblyman Huffman’s bill would limit the nonprofits eligible to apply for parks management to organizations whose purpose is to provide visitor services in state parks, facilitate public access to park resources, improve park facilities, provide interpretive and educational services, or provide direct protection or stewardship of natural, cultural or historical lands, or resources.

Further, all revenues received from a park may be used only for the “care, maintenance, operation, administration, improvement, or development” of the park. The qualified nonprofit

organization may additionally contribute in-kind services and funds raised from outside entities.

I believe the bill is a good starting point. However, organizations such as the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association will be severely challenged taking on full management and control of our Parks. Today, the organization has no full time professional staff members, and while we have some funds in our treasury, the bill would put the onus for any losses of the contracting organization without clear authority to initiate new fund raising efforts. It may be more promising to allow an organization with existing expertise in park management, such as our Regional Parks, to extend their reach to our State Parks.

Chuck Levine is a VMNHA Board member and Mounted Assistance Unit rider with over 2500 hours of volunteer service.

MAKING IT WORK!!

more ideas from
Richard Arendt

One of the best ways that the DPR can increase its revenues and thereby reduce the number of park closures is to redesign and aggressively market its Annual State Park Pass program. A good model for the DPR to follow is the park pass program developed by the Sonoma Regional Parks department. There are now over 9,000 members in this program which provides access to the 45 regional parks in Sonoma county. The pass is sold on-line and is also available at multiple retail stores throughout the county. The cost of Individual/Family Pass is \$69, Golden Years Pass \$39 and a Disabled Access Pass \$23. Their

renewal rate for existing members exceeds 80% -- one of the highest in the industry! One of the other cooperative associations recently made a PowerPoint presentation to DPR management with suggestions to improve the design and marketing of the State Park Pass program. This presentation estimated that approximately \$20 million a year in revenue can be raised via a better Pass program.

Another way to reduce the number of closed state parks is for the DPR to partner with other local open space groups such as LandPaths in Santa Rosa or with the Sonoma County Regional Parks department. Such a partnership might be ideal for Annadel SP, which borders with Spring Lake Regional Park. These organizations are able to manage open space on a cost-effective basis

as they rely on a strong group of volunteers and private donors.

A third alternative to keeping more state parks open is to enter into operating leases with private sector park management companies. The state of Arizona, which last year closed two-thirds of its state parks because of budget cuts, has now re-opened some of these parks through contracts with private companies. Typically, these park management companies are responsible for the administrative and interpretive programs, while the DPR retains ownership of the land and buildings and continues to provide law enforcement services. They are able to offer low-cost management without increasing the existing park entry and camping fees.

Richard Arendt is President of Sonoma/Petaluma State Parks Assoc.

WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS!

Please welcome our 35 new

volunteers, who graduated from the 6 week training course on Saturday April 30th.

Jacqueline Bahue
Vince Bierman
Laura Blatt
Karen Buchanan
Bill Cloud
Bea Fossell
Mark Glasser
Bill Greenley
Linda Grimes
Charles Haseltine
Jean Hasser
Lisa Heisinger

Katherine Lee
Diane Linneball
Larry Maniscalco
Pat Marcelli
Conci McKinney-Mack
Andrew McQuiddy
Melissa Meith
Sue Onsea
Katy O'Neil
Jim Ouimette
Marna Owen
Ashley Poggio

Christina Saschin
Steve Shaffer
Richard Smith
Chuck Stanley
Doc Stull
Marian Taylor
Sandy Wald
Lin Waldron
MJ Wickham
Judith Wright

Christine Wright-Shacklett
and additional new
volunteers:

Lucas Ivor - Piano player
Adolfo Hernandez - Piano
player
Jim Wittes - Piano player
Veda Rose Pope - MAU
Joanna Proctor - MAU
Katherine Dunbar

FASHION IN THE PARK . . .

This weekend, I was lucky enough to attend a lecture and tour of Charmian London's clothing collection at the Jack London State Historic Park in Glen Ellen, CA – organized through the Western Region of the Costume Society of America.

Those in attendance were treated to a lecture by Jo Ann Stabb, who conducted an assessment of this collection of over 100 artifacts in 2002-3 for the California State Parks. On display at Sonoma Developmental Center were some lovely theater coats, evening shoes, a lace blouse and an evening dress. The lecture highlighted Charmian's independent spirit and outgoing nature, and drew links between her wardrobe and the larger fashion world of each era.

Many of the garments in her collection draw strong correlations with the House of Lucille and with Paul Poiret – though it's not likely that she purchased items from these makers. Jack London's mother was an accomplished seamstress, as was Charmian herself.

At various times Charmian's style was inspired by the Aesthetic Movement and Art Nouveau (especially during her bohemian days in Berkeley and Oakland), and often by her travels abroad with Jack



(including trips to Hawaii and the tropics, where she would don Mother Hubbard style dresses and Kimono's). Japanese, African and other ethnic influences can certainly be found in extant photos and clothing pieces in the collection. Not surprisingly, she had a love of fur – especially trimming hats and garments (reminiscent of Lucille).

The incredibly informative and well attended lecture was followed by lunch and a visit to the Jack London State Historic

Park to see the House of Happy Walls (where Charmian's closets were on view). Docents were on hand to answer our questions, and a park volunteer played music on Charmian London's piano – much to the delight of the visitors. Carol Dodge, State Historian, provided background on many of the amazing artifacts.



What made this event all the more bittersweet was the news that the Jack London State Historic Park is one of many on a proposed list of park closures due to a \$22 million California general fund budget cut. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, those closures are expected to begin in September and have already been approved by the California Legislature.

It will be the first time in California's history, including during the Great Depression, that state parks have closed

because of budget cuts and parks that remain open also will have reduced services.

What isn't obvious to many, is that some of these parks also house historic collections of costumes and textiles (as well as other artifacts) – and access to these collections would also be diminished. According to one parks employee "Parks

that do end up being closed will be in a caretaker status, and the collections will still be preserved." While officials weren't able to confirm which parks had historic costume and textile collections, they indicated that the Governor's Mansion and Leland Stanford Mansion both include displays of historic dress. Upon further research, it seems that the Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park also has historic costume, and is scheduled to close in

September (For a complete list of California collections housing historic costumes and textiles, see Clothing And Textile Collections in the United States: A Csa Guide).

From the blog FASHION HISTORIA by Heather A. Vaughan

For more photos go to <http://fashionhistorian.net/blog/2011/05/16/historic-costume-in-california-state-parks>

reprinted with the gracious permission of Heather Vaughan



CELEBRATE THE PARK ANNADEL'S 40th Anniversary

VMNHA joined with Empire Runners and Fleet Feet Santa Rosa at the second annual Annadel Half Marathon April 17th. Our children's games and park information booths were a big hit and we enjoyed pitching our tents next to REI, Gibbons Slack Line, and the other great sponsors to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of

one of our valley's premier parks.

This year a 5k was held to benefit Kathy's Camp, a non-profit serving children of cancer patients, and brought in over \$4,000! \$23,000+ raised from the Annadel Half Marathon is hoped to be used to maintain or improve trails within Annadel, through Sonoma County Trails Council, but the park must remain open!!!

www.annadel40th.com
www.annadelhalf.com

Games like the MYSTERY BOX and SACK RACES were a big hit, with many children spending hours playing on the hay bales, spinning hula hoops, jumping rope and playing RECYCLE RELAY. Volunteers had a great time keeping the kids occupied at two booths,

one for quiet activities like coloring and drawing, and the other for more active sports. Prizes and gifts were given, and Junior Ranger coloring books in Spanish and English were available.

Next year we hope to host CELEBRATE THE PARK for SUGARLOAF's 50th. Stay tuned!

Ruth Coleman, who runs California State Parks, says they regret the closing the parks...but

“with the proposed budget reductions over the next two years, we can no longer afford to operate all parks within the system,” Coleman said in a news release.

“These cuts are unfortunate, but the state’s current budget crisis demands that tough decisions be made,” said Resources Secretary John Laird. “Hopefully, Republicans in the legislature will agree to allow California voters to decide whether we extend currently existing taxes or make deeper cuts to our parks.”

When reached by phone Friday, Stearns said the department will avoid any layoffs as a result of the parks closures.

"We have about 500 vacancies in the system. We hope to move those employees to positions in other parks that are still operating," Stearns said.

Stearns said it is about a 2,300-position system, but they have been operating at 500 fewer workers than were employed by the park system in 1979.

"We've also get about 10 million more visitors per year with about 500,000 more acres," he added.

The land will go into caretaker status, according to Stearns.

"We won't sell it or dispose of it in any way." He said park rangers and maintenance people will check on the properties periodically.

OUR PROMISE

We will make every effort to prevent the closure of our parks.

VALLEY OF THE MOON NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

California State Parks has now released the list of State Parks to be closed due to budget cuts. Among the 70 parks to be permanently closed are Annadel State Park, Jack London State Historic Park and Sugarloaf Ridge State Park. Closures will start as early as September and all parks scheduled to be closed will be locked no later than July 1, 2012.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about what will actually happen. Please help us work toward eliminating the closures altogether by contacting your state legislators and telling them to adequately fund the parks. You can write to your legislators from this convenient link on the California State Park Foundation website. The Valley of the Moon Natural History Association has for the last 34 years provided financial support for our State Parks. You can support us with your membership or donation.

Click to <http://moonvalleystore.3dcartstores.com>.

JACK LONDON STATE HISTORIC PARK 50th anniversary last year, is slated for closure. Wolf House Ruins, above



**VALLEY OF THE MOON NATURAL
HISTORY ASSOCIATION
VMNHA**

California State Parks, Valley Sector

Jack London State Historic Park

2400 London Ranch Road

Glen Ellen, CA 95442

Board of Directors:

Greg Hayes, President

Lou Leal, Vice President

Dave Chalk, Secretary

Sheila Ward, Treasurer

Al Stumpf

Chuck Levine, MAU rep

Matt Atkinson

Chris Ward, Docent Council rep

William Murray

Larry Houghton

John Felton

Rich Ward



SUPPORT OUR STATE PARKS, VOLUNTEER!

ANNADEL PHOTO CONTEST

CELEBRATE THE PARK and enter the PHOTO CONTEST

This year 5th graders through Pro photographers can take pictures in

Annadel

ENTRIES WELCOME through August 1, 2011.

This program helps us bring the park to the people through a traveling exhibit, where winning photographs are displayed in community venues

Our 40th Anniversary of ANNADEL website is live, go to

www.annadel40th.com

Find out how easy it is to enter our annual photo contest and see the winners from last year!

GRAND PRIZE is \$100 cash or a statewide State Parks Pass