State of California – The Natural Resources Agency

Memorandum

Date : March 11, 2013

To : All Employees

From : Major General Anthony L. Jackson, USMC (Ret) AJ 3/11/13
Director
Department of Parks and Recreation

Subject : State Parks 150th Anniversary

As announced last October by Acting Director Janelle Beland, 2014 will mark the 150th anniversary of California State Parks. The 150th Anniversary provides an opportunity for the Department: 1) to reinforce and reestablish the bond, value and trust that State Parks must have with the public; and 2) to highlight the value and contribution of State Parks to all Californians and the millions of visitors each year from outside the state.

It all started on June 30, 1864, when President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill granting Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees to the State of California "upon the express condition that the premises shall be held for public use, resort, and recreation, and shall be inalienable for all time." The following September 28th, California Governor Frederick Low issued a proclamation that accepted the federal grant and appointed the first state park commission. The first paid state parks employee was Galen Clark, who was appointed State Guardian of Yosemite on May 21, 1866 at a salary of $500 per year. These actions represented not only the birth of California State Parks, but in essence, the birth of the national park idea, which has spread all over the world.

What would become the California State Park System developed slowly after Yosemite was established. In 1890, the Marshall Monument was created as the first historical state park, and in 1891 Ezra Smith was appointed guardian of the monument. In 1902, the California Redwood Park at Big Basin was established, and in 1903 the first park warden J.H.B. Pilkington was appointed. Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove were returned to the federal government in 1906 to become part of the larger Yosemite National Park. With this transfer, the Marshall Monument (Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park) and Big Basin now represent the oldest state parks in the current system. Starting in 1928, 17 state parks that had originally been independently operated and 15 full-time employees were incorporated into the newly established Division of Parks. Today, the California State Park System has grown to 280 units with a visitation of more than 70 million people a year.

To mark the 150th Anniversary of California State Parks, a major effort is underway to recognize and highlight the many people – both inside and outside the Department – who have contributed to State Parks, to commemorate and document the development of the State Park System, and to promote the value of state parks to the people of

California and the nation. We are distributing a new brochure on California State Parks history and I encourage you to read it and familiarize yourself with the stories of our heritage.

To carry out the goals of the anniversary, I formed a 150th Anniversary Committee. Their job will be to help bring about and promote the many anticipated events and projects for the anniversary. The hope is that all staff can contribute to and participate in these anniversary events.

The 150th Anniversary Committee is currently made up of:

- Donna Pozzi, Co-Chair (Chief of Interpretation and Education Division)
- Mike Lynch, Co-Chair (Auburn Sector Superintendent, Gold Fields District)
- Steve Ptomey, California State Park Rangers Association (State Park Interpreter III, Tehachapi District)
- Vicky Waters & Roy Stearns, Public Affairs/Communications
- Scott Liske, California State Park Peace Officers Association (Supervising Ranger, Gold Fields District)
- Rich Rozzelle, District Superintendent, Channel Coast District
- Bob Rice, Maintenance Chief, Northern Buttes District
- Laurie Taylor, Administrative Assistant
- Jean Lacher, Chief, Office of Grants and Local Services
- Brian Robertson, OHMVR Division (Visitor Services Superintendent)
- Jenan Saunders, Office of Historic Preservation (Deputy SHPO)
- Sara Feldman, California State Parks Foundation
- Kass Hardy, National Park Service, Yosemite National Park

Please feel free to contact any member of the Anniversary Committee if you would like to be involved in the 150th. Stand by for much more on the anniversary. Email: 150th@parks.ca.gov

Finally, to express my commitment to the 150th Anniversary and my respect for the work performed by all state park staff, we are issuing a 150th logo pin to every permanent employee. These pins will be distributed in the near future. I hope each of you will wear these pins with pride in California State Parks and in your own efforts that go into making ours the finest State Park System in the world.