

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSOCIATION (SARA)
REGARDING COUNTY GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROBLEMS
AND THE COUNTY REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM

1 WHEREAS, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors will soon be
2 considering the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2010/2011 and press reports indicate
3 that substantial spending reductions will be needed to achieve a balanced budget.

4 WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of the Save the American River Association
5 (SARA) have considered the attached report "Sacramento County Government Budget
6 Crisis and the County Regional Park System" dated March 22, 2010;

7 WHEREAS, the SARA Board of Directors understands that, while other County
8 departments have been allowed to increase their percentage of the County's
9 discretionary spending, spending for the Regional Parks System has decreased such
10 that said spending in Fiscal Year 2009/2010 is only 0.36% of the County's discretionary
11 budget;

12 WHEREAS, the SARA Board of Directors is concerned that the County Budget
13 Crisis will adversely affect the County Regional Parks System which includes the
14 American River Parkway; and

15 WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of the Save the American River Association
16 finds that:

17 1. The Regional Parks System is important to the quality of life and economic
18 future of the residents of Sacramento County.

19 2. Preservation and protection of the American River Parkway requires a
20 thriving, successful Regional Parks System.

21 3. Sacramento County government has been unable to provide adequate,
22 long term, stable funding of the Regional Parks System.

23 4. Sacramento County government has the duty, which is on par with the
24 other duties of the Board of Supervisors, to preserve the Regional Parks System assets
25 that have been developed with taxpayer funds and donations and to protect these
26 assets from damage.

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RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSOCIATION (SARA) REGARDING
COUNTY GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROBLEMS AND
THE COUNTY REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM

1 NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Directors of the Save the American River
2 Association resolves as follows:

3 1. Sale of Regional Park system lands, facilities or other assets to overcome
4 County Budget problems is unacceptable, and not an option to be considered.

5 2. While no further reductions to the County Regional Parks System Budget
6 is strongly preferred, Sacramento County government must, at a minimum, identify and
7 provide the financial resources needed to protect the Regional Parks System assets
8 from damage and deterioration due to lack of use and vandalism.

9 3. Sacramento County government, cities and other local agencies should
10 endorse, support, and facilitate grass roots' efforts to develop adequate, long term,
11 stable funding option(s) for the Regional Parks System, including but not limited to, an
12 independent regional parks district such as the East Bay Regional Parks District.

13 4. Options for adequate, long term, stable funding should be presented to the
14 public as soon as practicable for a decision regarding the future of the Regional Park
15 System.

16 5. To this end, the Save the American River Association will participate in a
17 grass roots effort which is guided by the objectives of protection and preservation of the
18 Regional Parks System and development of adequate, long term, stable funding options
19 and the Association encourages other interested groups, neighborhood associations,
20 and individual citizens to join such grass roots effort.

21 6. Regardless of the means or option that may be selected to provide
22 adequate, long term, stable funding of the Regional Parks System: (a) the American
23 River Parkway shall be managed to balance the goals of (i) preserving naturalistic open
24 space and protecting the environmental quality within the urban environment and (ii)
25 contributing to the provision of recreational opportunities in the Sacramento area; and
26 (b) the American River Parkway Plan shall guide decisions affecting the Parkway,
27 specifically addressing the preservation, use, development and administration of the
28 Parkway.

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SACRAMENTO COUNTY GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROBLEMS AND THE COUNTY REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM¹

March 22, 2010

Background

Sacramento County government operates the Regional Parks system consisting of 15,000 acres that include natural open space areas, golf courses, picnicking areas, historical sites, and trails for bicycling, hiking, horseback riding, and a commuting alternative to the car. The System also includes recreational opportunities for special needs persons, maintenance of open space lands and historic sites, and the nationally recognized Effie Yeaw Nature Center within the American River Parkway that annually provides educational opportunities to more than 87,000 children and adults.

Taxpayer funds, bonds, and donations, have enabled the County to acquire the Regional Parks System over the past 50-years to provide citizens with opportunities to experience the natural environment and recreational opportunities not available in neighborhood parks. Efforts to acquire additional regional park land continue.

The County Regional Parks Department operates under the direction of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors. The Fiscal Year 2009/10 budget for the Regional Parks Department is \$12.5 million dollars. Revenues to pay these costs are shown as coming from the County General Fund (\$1.9 million), savings from the prior year (\$0.3 million), other County operating funds (\$4.4 million), and revenues produced by the Department from fees and grants (\$5.9 million). For comparison, the Sacramento Bee on June 17, 2009 reported that the total County General Fund Budget for FY 2009/2010 was \$2.03 billion.

The County Board of Supervisors will soon begin considering the budget for the Fiscal Year that begins July 1, 2010. If media reports are accurate, substantial spending reductions will likely be needed to achieve a balanced budget. In 2001, the Regional Parks Department was 1.73% of the County's discretionary budget. In FY 2009/10, the Regional Parks Budget is 0.36% of the County's discretionary budget. While other County Departments have been allowed to increase their percentage of the County's discretionary spending, spending for Regional Parks has decreased.

Closures and cutbacks due to cuts that have already been made to the Regional Parks Budget have resulted in overflowing garbage cans in the American River Parkway, partial closure of Effie Yeaw Nature Center, closure of Gibson Ranch Regional Park, and use of Habitat Restoration funds to avoid further reduction in the number of Park Rangers. These are but examples. All indications are that an already bad situation, for all Regional Parks and facilities, including the American River Parkway, will continue to worsen.

Clearly, the Regional Park System is in peril and at risk of being severely damaged and possibly lost. Ways must be found by the County and citizens to work co-operatively to mitigate the damage arising from County Budget problems and the overall state of the economy and find long term stable funding for the Regional Parks System. To do otherwise would be irresponsible.

Major Units of the System

American River Parkway
Cosumnes River Preserve
Deer Creek Hills
Dry Creek Parkway
Elk Grove Regional Park
Gibson Ranch Regional Park
Mather Regional Park
Sacramento Delta Facilities

¹ This document is believed to represent the consensus of those individuals present at the March 12, 2010, meeting of the American River Parkway Coalition excepting those affiliated with Sacramento County who took no position.

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROBLEMS
AND THE COUNTY REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM**

March 22, 2010

CONCLUSION #1

The Regional Parks System is important to the quality of life and economic future of the residents of Sacramento County.

1. The Regional Parks System provides the public with low cost opportunities to recreate, exercise, experience the wonders that nature offers, and quiet places to relax that are increasingly important during these tough economic times.
2. The Regional Parks System is an amenity that influences decisions by people and businesses to locate within Sacramento County and contribute to the economic engine in Sacramento County.
3. The Regional Parks System has significant impact on the local economy. For example, spending by users of the American River Parkway has been reported² as contributing \$364 million to the local economy in 2006.

CONCLUSION #2

Sacramento County government is unable to provide adequate, long term, stable funding of the Regional Parks System.

1. In 2001, the Regional Parks Department was 1.73% of the County's discretionary budget. In FY 2009/10 the Regional Parks Budget is 0.36% of the County's discretionary budget. While other Departments have been allowed to increase their percentage of the County's discretionary spending, spending for Regional Parks has decreased.³
2. The County's budget problems that have given rise to reductions in spending for Regional Parks have been regular news since before 2004 and do not appear likely to abate soon.
3. The Regional Parks Budget for this year (ending June 30, 2010) is based on one time revenue of \$3 million that will not be available after June 30, 2010, unless additional General Fund or other revenues are appropriated by the County Board of Supervisors³. Clearly, indications are that County Budget decisions for Fiscal Year 2010/11 (which begins July 1, 2010) have huge implications for the Regional Parks System and may mean loss of the Department of Regional Parks.

CONCLUSION #3

Sacramento County government has the duty, which is on par with the other duties of the Board of Supervisors, to preserve the Regional Parks System assets and to protect these assets from damage.

1. Over the 50 years since the founding of the Regional Parks Department, Sacramento County has used taxpayer funds and donations to acquire land, build facilities, and to operate and maintain facilities. For example, more than \$10 million in bonds issued in 1972 and repaid with taxpayer money have been used to develop the American River Parkway.

² "American River Parkway 2006 Financial Needs Update", The Dangermond Group, August 10, 2006.

³ Ms. Janet Baker, Director, Sacramento County Regional Parks Department at the meeting of the SARA Board of Directors on January 19, 2010.

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROBLEMS
AND THE COUNTY REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM**

March 22, 2010

2. Tough budget times generate pressures to reduce maintenance and public safety personnel to such an extent that the taxpayers' investments in the Regional Parks System may be damaged or even lost.
3. While no further cuts to the Regional Parks budget is preferable, Sacramento County government must, at a minimum, identify and provide financial resources needed to protect Regional Park Facilities from damage and deterioration due to lack of use and vandalism.

CONCLUSION #4

Sale, transfer, or other disposition of Regional Parks System lands or facilities to overcome County budget problems is unacceptable.

1. Acquisition of new Regional Parks System lands and facilities to replace those sold to overcome budget problems cannot be guaranteed.
2. Costs of acquisition of new Regional Parks System lands and facilities to replace lands and facilities sold would be more expensive and perhaps cost prohibitive.
3. Sale of Regional Parks System lands or facilities would, therefore, likely mean the irretrievable loss of park lands and facilities.
4. This conclusion should not be interpreted as precluding the transfer of the Regional Park System to a successor entity developed via the grass roots efforts that may result from Conclusion #5 below.

CONCLUSION #5

Sacramento County government, cities and other local agencies should endorse, support, and facilitate grass roots' efforts to develop adequate, long term, stable funding option(s) for the County Regional Parks System so that the public can make a decision regarding the future of the Regional Park System.

1. Sacramento County government is in a budget crisis that will require all of us to make hard choices from among equally important priorities— sheriff's deputies, parks, health and human services are examples. Clearly the Board of Supervisors is faced with a very difficult balancing act.
2. Protection and preservation of the Regional Park System that has been developed by the efforts of so many people over such a long time, and development of adequate, long term, stable funding option(s) are the objectives that must guide the efforts of citizens, County government, cities and local agencies to respond to the County budget problems.
3. The previous effort in 1994 to establish a regional park and open space district that would have been under the supervision of the County Board of Supervisors was not successful. Nevertheless, (a) a grass roots' effort must be undertaken to present option(s) to the citizens rather than abandon our Regional Park System, and (b) the East Bay Regional Parks District approach is worthy of consideration for the County Regional Park System. Other options may surface as the grass roots' efforts proceeds.