



# STATE PARK PEACE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

REPRESENTING THE PROFESSIONAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS  
OF ALL STATE PARK RANGERS AND LIFEGUARDS



Dec. 18, 2009

## Rangers Endorse State Park Access Pass

The State Park Peace Officers Association of California, representing California's State Park Rangers and Lifeguards, endorses the "California State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act of 2010".

California is home to the nation's finest State Parks, protecting an unparalleled diversity of natural resources, scenic beauty, and historic sites. Funding for State Parks is subject to not just the state of the economy but to the philosophy of the ruling political party. For many years, in good times and bad, through administrations of both parties, California State Parks have been allowed to slowly decline, resulting in an unprecedented threat to those lands most dear to Californians. A stable funding source for State Parks, for the shared heritage of all Californians, is absolutely vital. The State Parks Access Pass will provide that funding.

"This initiative is the last best chance to save our State Parks before they spiral into a state of neglect that there will be no recovery from, and it is crucial that it pass" said Richard Bergstresser, President of SPPOAC. "Funding from this initiative must not be hijacked for other purposes. The resources at the field level, the level that provides service to visitors and boots-on-the-ground protection of our parks, have never been at a lower level. This funding cannot be allowed to go to pet projects or outside purposes – it must support the ongoing operation and protection of our parks".

In 1980 there were as many as 600 field-level Rangers – today there are fewer than 350. In 1990-91 there were 59 million visits to State Parks – in 2004-05 there were nearly 76 million visits. In 1998 there was an average of 33 public safety incidents per 100,000 visitors that required the services of a State Park Peace Officer – by 2006 that number had risen to 70 incidents per 100,000 visitors.

"One of our major concerns is that this Access Pass will allow unlimited day use access for Californians, resulting in much increased visitation", said Bergstresser. "While we are happy to see people enjoy parks, if this initiative passes it is vital that a significant increase in field staffing, equipment, and other resources happen immediately. Without those additional resources the increased visitation will just increase the downward spiral".

SPPOAC calls on all State Park Rangers and Lifeguards, and all who love and cherish State Parks, to work to get this initiative on the ballot in 2010. State Parks equipment is dated, the infrastructure is falling apart, field staffing is at an all-time low, parks are suffering, and something must be done now. Rarely do Californians get such a simple proposition – is \$15 a year per vehicle worth unlimited day use access in a the nation's finest parks? SPPOAC thinks it is, and hopes you will to.