

Opinion: Vehicle license fee saves California park funding

By Mike Sweeney

Some of my favorite moments are spent with my family at our local state parks. A day of hiking at San Bruno Mountain State Park is at the top of my list. The park is close and accessible, and we practically take it for granted. Unfortunately, with each visit, the problems confronting our parks become more visible.

On San Bruno Mountain, budget cuts have made park rangers a rare sight – no longer available to answer questions or explain the features of the park. Once-pristine natural habitats are overrun by invasive species. Our favorite trails are overgrown and sometimes closed. Restrooms might or might not be open and clean. But the worst part is that the problems at this urban oasis are far from isolated.

California's 278 state parks are falling apart because of chronic underfunding. Roofs and sewage systems leak, restrooms are not cleaned regularly, bridges have collapsed, trails are closed, campgrounds and visitor centers are shuttered, and buildings and other structures throughout the system are badly deteriorated.

Altogether, state parks have amassed a \$1.3 billion backlog in needed maintenance and repairs, turning the nation's best state park system into one of the country's most endangered sites, according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Read the whole story

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*conservation organization. To learn more, go to
www.YesForStateParks.com.*