

California parks feeling burden of funding cuts

By Marjie Lundstrom and Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

They were left to the people of California, gifts of natural beauty and magnificence to be passed through the generations.

For California's 278 state parks, that heritage is becoming an iffy proposition.

Amid a sagging economy and chronic state budget deficit, California's parks – like other state park systems across the nation – are at a critical financial crossroads.



Grover Hot Springs in Markleeville is part of the State Parks system.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Years of budget cuts have produced a \$1 billion backlog of crumbling buildings and eroding trails, according to a five-month examination by McClatchy newspapers in California. The vacancy rate among California park rangers stands at 30 percent. Reported crimes in state parks tripled over the past decade as the state added more parks – but not park rangers –

a data analysis shows.

“We’re on the wrong end of a 30-year downward trend,” said California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman.

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