

Decision on closing state parks expected in mid-February

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

After spending a century building the nation's largest and most majestic state park system, Californians are poised to do something unprecedented: Retreat from that legacy and start closing parks.

Years of budget cuts in the California State Parks system have resulted in widespread reductions in park hours, crumbling facilities and reduced staffing. But in the past few years, lawmakers have rejected widespread closures proposed by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Now, however, the climate has changed. Gov. Jerry Brown's budget requires another \$22 million in cuts to the parks budget – a pittance compared with the \$25 billion state budget deficit, but a number that even strong parks supporters say is unlikely to be achieved without shuttering parks.

Brown also wants cuts of \$30 million to local libraries and \$32 million to local fairs.

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