

State Parks struggling to deal with money woes

By Kathryn Reed

BRENTWOOD – When Jerry Brown was governor the first time, 90 percent of the State Parks' budget was from the general fund. As of July 1, Brown proposes the general fund will be responsible for 28 percent of that department's budget.

"Now we have to fund our mission," is how Ruth Coleman, director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, put it at a meeting last week. Parks will be cut by \$22 million in fiscal year 2012-13 as the proposals are written today.



Parks Director
Ruth Coleman
addresses the
commission
Jan. 27.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

She said while the mission of the department has not changed, how it is funded has. Still on the table is the closure of 70 of the 278 state parks beginning July 1 – the start of the next fiscal year.

"We don't know if the 70 closures are permanent," Coleman told the California State Park and Recreation commissioners.

Coleman told the seven-member board she is creating a business plan for every park, which is more like a strategic plan, for how to manage the parks. This includes developing public-private partnerships, having staff develop a more entrepreneurial mindset, being flexible, and possibly combining state parks.

Workshops will be conducted at five locations on Feb. 22 to gather input from the public and possible partners about how they want the parks to function going forward. The nearest meeting location to Lake Tahoe will be in West Sacramento. Time and exact locations are on the department's website.

Coleman said she is working on ways to allow parks to keep more of the money they generate. However, this could be subject to approval by higher ups.

Lake Tahoe comes under the High Sierra region, which has 11 units in it.