

Opinion: Time to act to keep California parks open

By Michael Brune and Kathryn Phillips

Are you a native of California? Neither are we. In fact, about one in five Californians were born in a different state. Across the United States, millions of people grow up seeing pictures of California's stunning redwoods, mountains, deserts and beautiful beaches – and dream of visiting them some day. Some of us are lucky enough to become Californians who can explore these wonders through California's parks. How long will that remain the case?

This summer, when the Brune family goes camping in Mendocino's Hendy Woods State Park, we'll be thankful that this pocket of old-growth California redwoods has earned a reprieve, along with roughly half of the 70 parks originally marked for closure July 1. It'll be bittersweet, though, because the crisis that faces California's state parks remains unsolved. Although Hendy Woods will stay open – for now – many parks are virtually certain to close, and those that remain open will continue struggling to operate under severe budget constraints.

Our state parks provide both recreation and a network of amazing ecological diamonds where we can find respite in nature, view wildlife and rejuvenate from the pressures of city living. Last Memorial Day, Californians made 10,000 camping reservations. That's a lot of s'mores.

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