

Brown wants to use 'found' California parks money to encourage donations

By Kevin Yamamura and Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown asked lawmakers Friday to spend \$20 million in newfound parks money on repairs and a matching fund to solicit future donations rather than return money to donors who gave when they believed the system was broke.

The governor's announcement came as his Department of Finance determined that none of California's other 560-plus special funds contain hidden assets akin to what the state parks department tucked away, based on an audit compiled in the past two weeks.

The department, however, found multiple cases totaling \$268.5 million in which departments made accounting errors showing either more or less money than the Finance Department knew about in 2011. The biggest error – a \$113.3 million mistake in the state Beverage Container Recycling Fund – was corrected before lawmakers and Brown crafted the budget they enacted in June.

Department of Finance Director Ana Matosantos said those gaps were honest mistakes, in contrast to state Department of Parks and Recreation officials "deliberately" hiding assets for years.

"There are accounting differences ...," Matosantos said, "but there are not other hidden asset-type circumstances in other departments."

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