

California park passes can be bought when filing tax return

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Californians can purchase a state parks annual pass on their income tax return for the 2012 tax year.

The pass costs \$195 and provides unlimited day-use access for one year to 130 state parks, or about half of all parks in the California Department of Parks and Recreation system. Taxpayers can also contribute more than \$195 and the additional amount is tax-deductible and will go to support park operations.

The program was created by AB 1589, a state law approved in September and authored by Rep. Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, then in the Assembly.

Only one pass can be purchased per tax return, and only if the taxpayer expects a refund at least equal to the price of the pass.

The passes cover daily admission fees, not additional fees such as camping and boat launching.

The "Contributions" section of the 540 and 540a tax returns contains a new line to enter the price of the parks pass, and a description is found on Page 15 of the instructions for the forms.

For more information, including a list of parks that accept the annual pass, go online.