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June 1, 2009 UPDATED

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
State Capitol, First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Via Fax: 916-558-3160

Re: Keep California State Parks Open for All

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

Rather than threatening to close state parks – again – California should be using the state parks as an economic stimulus to help get the state back to work through green jobs and healthy, livable communities for all. Parks are an economic stimulus and a vital part of the state's infrastructure. A recent study by New York State, for example, shows that state parks give back more than five times the state investment, with billions of dollars in annual economic impacts in addition to 20,000 jobs.

Even in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, people across the United States voted to tax themselves to provide billions of dollars to create green space in November 2008. California voters have repeatedly voted to tax themselves to create more parks over the past ten years. The Obama administration has launched a \$787 billion economic stimulus package to get the nation back to work, and additional megafunds have become available for green space from other federal, state and local sources.

Drawing on New Deal lessons for economic recovery through infrastructure investments, parks can provide economic benefits including places for physical activity to reduce obesity, improve health, and cut medical costs; local green jobs for youth and small and disadvantaged business enterprises; Conservation Corps type programs to diversify job and career opportunities for all and to permanently improve the park system, and transit to trails.

Parks offer multiple benefits beyond dollars and cents. These benefits include the simple joys of playing in the park; social cohesion, or bringing people together; improved physical, psychic, and social health; improved youth development and academic performance; positive alternatives to gangs, crime, drugs, and violence; conservation values of clean air, water, land, and habitat protection, and climate justice; art, culture and historic preservation; preservation of Native American sites; spiritual values in protecting the earth and its people; and sustainable regional planning. Fundamental principles of equal justice and democracy justify equal access to these benefits.

Everyone will suffer from the closure of parks, but people of color will suffer first and worst because they systematically lack access to parks and recreation. A diverse and growing alliance supports equal access to green space to achieve healthy livable communities for all, including economic justice, health, youth, job, and environmental advocates.

The fact that voters rejected the recent ballot propositions does not mean voters want fewer services and lower taxes. Voters want effective government.

We fully incorporate by reference here the attached Policy Report *Economic Stimulus, Green Space, and Equal Justice* (The City Project 2009), [tinyurl.com/5mbu6j](http://tinyurl.com/5mbu6j), and the principles and policy recommendations of the California Green Stimulus Group, [tinyurl.com/m3kg4j](http://tinyurl.com/m3kg4j). We also refer you to *Realizing the Vision for a*

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*Healthy California: Opportunities in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (Strategic Alliance 2009), [tinyurl.com/krkx4d](http://tinyurl.com/krkx4d), and *A Stimulus for Better Health: Realizing the Vision for a Healthy California* (Prevention Institute 2009), [tinyurl.com/n7x9fu](http://tinyurl.com/n7x9fu).

We look forward to working with you, the legislature, and the people to keep state parks open for all.

Very truly yours,

Anahuak Youth Sports Association  
BikeSage  
California Center for Public Health Advocacy  
California Green Stimulus Coalition  
California Food Policy Advocates  
California Pan Ethnic Health Network  
Caminando cón Fé/Walking with Faith  
Cesar Chavez Institute, San Francisco State University  
Communities for a Better Environment  
Community Health Councils  
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights  
Environment California  
George Koster Consulting  
Global Exchange  
Green LA Coalition  
Greenlining Institute  
Healthy for Life (CCROPP) Tulare County  
LA Community Garden Council  
National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC)  
Policy Link  
Prevention Institute  
Robert Bracamontes, Acjachemen Nation, Juaneño Tribe  
Samuels and Associates  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 721  
Sierra Business Council  
Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC)  
Southern California Watershed Alliance  
The City Project  
TransForm  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Urban Semillas  
Youth Violence and Gang Prevention, Children's Hospital Los Angeles  
(Partial list)

Enclosure

cc:

Senate Pro Tem Leader Darrell Steinberg  
Speaker Karen Bass  
Inspector General Laura Chick