

# AB 1457 – Protecting California’s State Parks

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## Assemblymember Jared Huffman

### IN BRIEF

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Preserves the integrity of California’s state park system by creating a consistent policy that protects state parks from damaging road development projects.

### THE ISSUE

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Existing law does not provide a consistent process for considering, approving or denying road projects through state parks. As a consequence, local governments and state agencies have proposed, and continue to propose, new roads or widening of current roads through sensitive state park areas. One of the most egregious examples is a joint powers agency’s proposal for a toll road through the heart of San Onofre State Beach in San Diego County. However, parks in the Inland Empire, North Coast, San Francisco Bay and Sacramento area are all also facing threats of road proposals.

In general, the construction of roads through parks is an extremely damaging activity, and one that is inconsistent with the purpose of parks. New road construction or road widenings disrupt habitat and wildlife corridors, have impacts on water quality, create noise pollution, and negatively impact recreational opportunities.

### EXISTING LAW

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Existing state law allows for the Department of Parks and Recreation to acquire, develop and manage state parks and units of the state park system. Other than lead agency or reviewing agency status in responding to environmental review processes, no specific process exists within state law that gives the Department of Parks and Recreation primary authority to deny road projects that have impacts on the natural, cultural or historical resources within state park units.

### THE SOLUTION

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AB 1457 stops the destruction that damaging road construction through state parks brings. It ensures that no state or local governmental body shall construct, authorize, or approve a road project that will physically impact a state park or impair the

recreational value of the state park. AB 1457 does not ban all road projects in state parks. It allows road projects to proceed as long the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation finds that:

- the project includes planning to minimize harms;
- there are no feasible alternatives to the proposed project; and
- the road is necessary for the operation, maintenance or use of the state park; is necessary for fire prevention or suppression; or is necessary for the construction, maintenance or operation of utilities on state park property.

### BACKGROUND

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California’s state park system is the largest state park system in the world. With its humble beginnings in an early 1900s purchase of 2,500 acres of California redwoods that became Big Basin Redwood State Park, California set the tone for what has been a more than 100 year vision for protecting and preserving the places and features that make the state unique. Within a system that includes 278 parks, more than 1.5 million acres of land are managed for natural, cultural and historical resource values. California’s state park system receives more than 76 million visitors annually and houses over 3,100 historic buildings and more than 14,000 individual and group campsites.

State parks serve as much-needed areas for recreation and physical fitness activities, as highly-visited outdoor classrooms and places of learning for students throughout the state. As places of natural beauty, they serve as quiet places of refuge and rejuvenation for state park visitors. California’s state parks are also low-cost, popular vacation destinations for Californians of all economic means.

### SUPPORT

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California State Parks Foundation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Sierra Club California

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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