

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

After one month, donations on track to meet 2009-11 budget

From the beginning of the 2009-11 biennium July 1 to Sept. 30, 2009, State Parks received \$1.4 million in donations. This first tally of the new donation program created by the 2009 Legislature includes donations made in July and August. September renewal notices were mailed in July and August, and some people paid early. The total also includes some donations made through the earlier donation program that preceded September renewals.

If donation levels continue in the current manner, State Parks will be able to meet the 2009-11 budget and keep state parks open.

Average monthly donations needed: The Legislature projected that State Parks would need \$28 million in donations over a full two-year budget period to keep state parks open. Because the new donation program started two months into the biennium with September vehicle license tab renewals, there are only 22 collection months. **For that reason, State Parks needs an average of approximately \$1.25 million a month in donations over the two years of the biennium to meet its budget.**

The new donation program: The 2009 Legislature established the new donation program to help prevent the temporary closure or mothballing of approximately 40 state parks as the result of budget reductions. Here's how the program works: When vehicle owners renew their license tabs, a \$5 donation for State Parks is included in the bill. Vehicle owners who don't wish to make the donation simply subtract \$5 from their total, as outlined on the Department of Licensing renewal notice and payment coupon.

About the State Parks budget: The new donation program was created to help replace tax dollars lost when the Legislature cut \$52 million from the State Parks' General Fund tax funding base used to operate parks. The Legislature also shifted some other funds to State Parks to help offset the loss.

When will the Legislature review the program to determine whether it is successful? State Parks will report back to the Legislature in January 2010 about the level of donations coming in to support park operations. The budget language stipulated that all parks would remain open provided sufficient revenues are collected.

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For more information, visit www.parks.wa.gov

