
**Community Development, Housing &
Tribal Affairs Committee**

HB 1530

Brief Description: Promoting a balanced financing system for state parks programs and services in order to facilitate resource stewardship, interpretative activities, cultural events, and works of art in state parks.

Sponsors: Representatives McCoy, Angel, Ryu, Sawyer, Santos, Ormsby, Van De Wege, Bergquist and Sells; by request of Parks and Recreation Commission.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the State Parks Commission (State Parks) to seek reimbursement for costs of the park passes program, based on a forecast report provided by the Office of Financial Management.
- Authorizes the State Parks to conduct natural, cultural, or historical resource interpretive activities and to enter into agreements with private sector organizations and governmental agencies to assist with these interpretation activities.
- Authorizes the State Parks Foundation to support the operation of the state parks system and coordinate with the State Parks in fundraising activities.

Hearing Date: 2/14/13

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

The State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) owns and manages a diverse system of parks with many different types of facilities and historic buildings and a variety of recreation programs. The State Parks operate 116 open and developed parks and manages other undeveloped lands.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Park Passes.

The State Parks set rates and charge camping fees in park campgrounds. Under the park passes program, the State Parks issues different park passes for specially designated groups that qualify for discounts or exemptions from park fees. These passes include: senior citizen passes, disability passes, lifetime veteran disability passes, and foster home passes for those who provide care.

Environmental Interpretation Activities.

Within the scope of its management authority, the State Parks is authorized to provide environmental interpretation activities for visitors that:

- explain the functions, history, and cultural aspects of ecosystems;
- explain the relationship between human needs, human behaviors and attitudes, and the environment; and
- offer experiences and information to increase citizen appreciation and stewardship of the environment and its multiple uses.

The State Parks may solicit and enter into agreements with private sector organizations and governmental agencies to assist with these interpretation activities. Commercial advertising is prohibited under such an agreement, although logos and credit lines are permitted for sponsoring organizations.

State Parks Gift Foundation.

In 2000 the Legislature ordered the State Parks to create the State Parks Gift Foundation (Foundation), an independent non-profit corporation whose purpose is to solicit support for the state parks system and encourage gifts to improve the state parks. The composition of the board of directors is statutorily defined.

The Foundation conducts a competitive grant process to award funding to the state park system. Only the State Parks is eligible to apply for the Foundation grants. The State Parks may not use the money awarded to the Foundation to supplant preexisting funding sources.

Summary of Bill:

Park Pass Program - Reimbursement.

The State Parks must seek reimbursement each biennium for the fiscal opportunity cost incurred by the commission in complying with Park Passes discounts and exemptions from camping fees. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) must provide an annual report to the Legislature on the forecast of the fiscal opportunity cost for the upcoming biennium. The amount requested by the State Parks may not exceed OFM's forecast for purposes of seeking reimbursement.

Interpretive Activities (Natural, Cultural, or Historical Resources).

The State Parks may provide natural, cultural, or historical resource interpretive activities for visitors to state parks that:

- explain the functions, history, significance, and cultural aspects of ecosystems;
- explain the relationship between human needs, human behaviors and attitudes, and the environment;
- explain the diverse human heritage and cultural changes over time in the state;
- offer experiences and information to increase citizen appreciation and stewardship of their natural and cultural heritage;
- protect natural, cultural, or historical resources from the impacts of human activities; or
- increase awareness, appreciation, and enjoyment of the state's ethnic and cultural heritage and contemporary works of art.

The State Parks may enter into agreements with the Foundation, private sector individuals, organizations, businesses, employee business units, other public agencies, and tribes for natural, cultural, scenic and recreational stewardship and interpretive purposes.

State Parks Foundation.

The State Parks Gift Foundation is named the "State Parks Foundation" (Foundation). The purpose of the Foundation is to build constituencies, engage in public outreach, and encourage gifts and private sponsorship activities to support the operation, acquisition, and improvement of the state parks system. The composition of the Foundation's board of directors is governed by the Non-Profit Corporation Act.

The Foundation shall coordinate with the State Parks in fundraising activities. The Foundation may award grants to the State Parks, friends groups, or other associations established to benefit the state parks system. The Foundation and the State Parks director shall jointly develop criteria for awarding grants. Awards may be granted for projects that contribute to the operation of the state parks system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.