
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Josh Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1804 **Hearing Date:** July 1, 2026
Author: Hart
Version: February 10, 2026 Introduced
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Edith Hannigan

Subject: State parks: parks passes: libraries

SUMMARY

This bill would authorize the Department of Parks and Recreation to work with the California State Library and individual library systems to provide passes to state park units.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

California State Park System. According to the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks), the State Park System consists of 280 state park units, over 340 miles of coastline, 970 miles of lake and river frontage, 15,000 campsites, 5,200 miles of trails, 3,195 historic buildings, and more than 11,000 known prehistoric and historic archaeological sites; the largest and most diverse recreational, natural, and cultural heritage holdings of any state agency in the nation. More than 68 million people annually visit California's State Park System.

Reduced Rate or Free State Parks Passes: State Parks offers a number of annual passes to the general public for a fee. There are five passes offering free or discounted entry to State Park units on an annual or per-visit basis:

- Adventure Pass – offers free entry to 54 state parks to fourth graders and their families, valid for September 1 to August 31 of the child's fourth grade year.
- Disabled Discount Pass – for \$3.50, offers a lifetime pass to persons with permanent disabilities entitling the bearer to a 50% discount on vehicle day use, family camping, and boat-use fees at over 100 park units.
- Distinguished Veterans Pass – offers a free lifetime pass for vehicle day use, family camping, and boat use at over 100 park units to veterans meeting certain criteria.
 - Veterans and active-duty military can also receive a reduced fee or free day use at state parks units operated by the state and accessible with a vehicle day use annual pass on Memorial Day and Veterans Day (Public Resources Code (PRC) §5011.6).
- Golden Bear Pass - offers social services recipients and low-income seniors a pass for free vehicle day use access, valid for a calendar year.
- Senior Golden Bear Pass – for \$20, offers individuals 62 and over with free entry to many state parks during non-peak seasons, valid for a calendar year.

There are two “full price” annual state parks passes.

- The Explorer Vehicle Day Use Annual Pass is valid for one year and provides vehicle entrance to 134 state parks for \$195.
- The Golden Poppy Vehicle Day Use Annual Pass is valid for one year and provides vehicle entrance to 112 state parks for \$125.

California State Library Parks Pass. In partnership with the First Partner’s Office and the California State Library, State Parks provides free vehicle day use entry to over 200 participating state park units operated by State Parks for check out to library-card holders. The California State Library Parks Pass is valid for entry of one passenger vehicle with capacity of nine people or less or one highway licensed motorcycle.

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the California state park system and vests State Parks with control of the state park system and responsibility for administering, protecting, developing, and interpreting state parks for the use and enjoyment of the public. Requires State Parks to protect the state park system from damage and to preserve the peace therein (PRC § 5001 *et seq.*).
- 2) Limits attendance at the state park system to within limits established by carrying capacity (PRC §§ 5001.96, 5019.5).
- 3) Authorizes State Parks to collect fees, rents, and returns for use of any state park system area with some exceptions, including:
 - a) Prohibits State Parks from collecting any fee from students in kindergarten through 12th grade on a school outing (PRC § 5010.2);
 - b) Authorizes State Parks to provide discounted passes to certain groups of people including fourth graders, seniors over the age of 62, disabled persons, and low-income residents, as defined (PRC §§ 5010.2.5, 5011); and
 - c) Authorizes State Parks to issue a reduced fee or free day use permit to veterans, active-duty military, and reserve military personnel on Memorial Day and Veterans Day (PRC § 5011.6).

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would:

- 1) Codify findings and declarations that:
 - a. It is the policy of the state to ensure equitable and inclusive access to the state park system by empowering State Parks to administer programs that broaden public access to the state parks.
 - b. The state park system provides a host of important values to the residents of California, including recreational, cultural, environmental, and public health benefits.

- c. The current fee structures to enter a unit of the state park system create financial barriers that limit access for many residents.
 - d. It is imperative that State Parks support comprehensive access to the state parks for all residents of California.
- 2) Authorize State Parks to work with the California State Library and individual library systems to provide passes to state park units.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, “AB 1804 builds on California’s commitment to expanding equitable access to our state parks and ensuring all families can enjoy the health, recreation, and community benefits that parks provide. The California State Library Parks Pass is a proven, community-based model that helps reduce cost barriers, support mental health, and increase physical activity. Despite its clear benefits, the program has relied on annual budget decisions and must be reconsidered year after year, creating uncertainty for a program that many low-income families depend on. AB 1804 helps protect and strengthen the Library Parks Pass program and keeps a practical, no-cost pathway to the outdoors available for Californians who might otherwise be priced out.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None received.

COMMENTS

Library Parks Pass Program. The California Library State Parks Pass Program was a pilot program launched in 2021 as a partnership between the First Partner’s Office, State Parks, and the State Library. The Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee reviewed the Assembly Budget Subcommittee Number 4 notes on the State Library Parks Pass Program:

Data that State Parks has collected from surveys of Program users indicate that the Program serves participants across a range of incomes, including those at the lower end. Specifically, the survey found that 23% of respondents earn \$30,000 or less; 19% earn between \$30,001 and \$60,000; 15% earn between \$60,001 and \$90,000; and 11% report earning between \$90,001 and \$120,000. Among survey respondents, 64% identified costs as a factor for not previously visiting state parks. State Parks notes that while the Program is available throughout the state, State Parks has taken steps to increase access within lower-income communities by providing a larger proportion of passes to library branches located in areas with high poverty index percentages.

Outdoors for All Initiative. The Administration of Governor Gavin Newsom established the Outdoors for All Initiative to enable equitable access to nature and the outdoors in order to advance the Governor’s commitment to building a California for All. The Outdoors for All strategy calls for a future where everyone can experience and benefit from California’s incredible outdoor spaces. This bill would help further the goals of the initiative.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS: none

SUPPORT

California State Parks Foundation (sponsor)
Braille Institute Library
Butte County Library
California Coastal Protection Network
California Mountain Biking Coalition
Center for Environmental Health
Cleaneearth4kids.org
Concerned Off-road Bicyclists Association
East Bay Regional Park District
Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
Friends of the River
Home Gardens Library
Lacheraqui Media
Latino Outdoors
League of California Cities
Mammoth Lakes Library
Nature for All
Placentia Library District
Portola and Castle Rock Foundation
Redwood City Public Library
Resource Renewal Institute
San Bernardino Public Library
Santa Cruz Public Library
Santa Monica Public Library
Sierra Club
Sierra Madre Public Library
Sierra State Parks Foundation
Solano County
Sonoma County Library
Ten Strands
Valley Trails Summer Camp

OPPOSITION

None Received

-- END --