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Cal Poly Research Helps Power State Parks Plan

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Californians love the outdoors, want to get out and walk and bicycle more -- and they like campgrounds with restrooms. They think parks and recreation programs help the economy and keep children and teens out of trouble. And they think being in harmony with nature is important.

Those are just some of the findings in a new report on California State Parks that was powered by research by faculty in Cal Poly's Recreation, Parks and Tourism Department.

Professors Bill Hendricks, Jerusha Greenwood, Jeff Jacobs and Marni Goldenberg did the research for the report, titled "The California Opinions and Attitudes Survey on Outdoor Recreation." The research of the four professors will guide policy development and decision-making regarding accessibility to parks, future outdoor recreation programs, analysis of activity trends, and park management strategies by public recreation providers statewide for the next five years.

Their research entailed random surveys of nearly 2,800 California adults and approximately 400 youth. Grants awarded by the National Park Service, the CSU Agriculture Research Initiative and USDA, McIntire-Stennis funded the research.

Some findings from the report:

Californians love the outdoors and make frequent use of all kinds of parks and wilderness areas and think that's a healthy habit.

- More than 73.7 percent of those surveyed had visited a park within the last month
- 98 percent of the respondents said viewing scenic beauty is among their most favorite activities



Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

- 93 percent said that feeling in harmony with nature was also important to their enjoyment of the outdoors
- More than 87 percent of the respondents agreed that recreation programs help improve people's health
- 78.1 percent of respondents agreed that recreation programs help reduce crime and juvenile delinquency
- 74.9 percent agreed that recreation and park agencies create jobs and help the economy.

When asked which recreation activities they would like to participate in more often, Californians said:

1. Walking for fitness or pleasure (46 percent)
2. Camping in developed sites with facilities such as toilets and tables (45 percent)
3. Bicycling on paved surfaces (45 percent) and
4. Day hiking on trails (44 percent)

California's park and recreation areas are getting heavy use:

- 88 percent of the telephone survey respondents had visited a park within the last six months
- On average, respondents visited parks approximately six days in their most recent month surveyed and spent 8.5 hours during their last visit
- The majority of these respondents reported visiting parks one or more times per week (35.5 percent) or once or twice a month (26.2 percent)

Other collaborators on the project included California State Parks, the University of Utah, Diagnostics Plus, Inc. and Devine Tarbell and Associates.

For more information and to view the final report results, visit www.parks.ca.gov/planning_SPOA.

For more details on the Cal Poly Recreation, Parks and Tourism Department and contact information for the professors, visit the department Web site at: <http://rpta.calpoly.edu/>.

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