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Governor's May Revision to State Budget Keeps California on Track for Culture of Water Conservation, Helps State Parks, and Addresses Pot Farming Impacts

Sacramento, CA—Governor Jerry Brown's revisions to his proposed budget provides new funding that will help improve California's environment.

The proposal pulls back on funding for drought reaction now that the statewide drought has been declared over. But it increases funding for programs that will emphasize continuing conservation of water resources. This includes new positions at the state water board, which will be responsible for developing and implementing new urban and rural water conservation measures.

The budget revision also proposes an additional \$3 million to evaluate the safety and maintenance needs of the more than 1,400 dams in the state.

The governor's proposed revision applies new funds made available to the State Department of Parks and Recreation through Senate Bill 1. Among other things, those new funds include \$31.5 million to repair and maintain park infrastructure. This remains well short of the funding need of about \$1 billion to address deferred maintenance, but it does ensure that needed repairs will continue to be made.

Additionally, the parks budget includes \$1.5 million for a pilot project to provide transportation from urban areas and schools to state parks.

The May Revision also includes additional new funding for the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the State Water Board to hire staff to develop and implement regulations to protect California's wildlife, natural areas and water resources from any harmful effects of cannabis cultivation.

Statement of Kathryn Phillips, director of Sierra Club California:

“The governor is not in a spending mood and indicated again, today, that he is concerned about an economic downturn. That's prudent thinking at a time when the White House seems intent on cutting programs that support basic human needs, such as access to health care.

So it's a happy surprise to see continued commitment to water conservation in the revised budget proposal.

It's also good to see that the proposal adds new funds to chip away at the backlog in maintenance at state parks, and to make the parks accessible to everyone. It's a slow process, but the parks system is successfully digging itself out of a mess and becoming the park system California needs.

The harmful effects of legal and illegal cannabis growing on the environment, including water resources, has been distressing. Now that new laws and funding sources are in place, it is gratifying that the governor's budget revision includes spending that is absolutely needed to begin to stop and reverse the damage pot farmers have caused.”

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Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the 13 Sierra Club chapters in California, representing more than 400,000 members and supporters statewide.