



CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING STAFF REPORT COVER PAGE

Santa Rosa, CA
March 5, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: 10 – Northern Buttes District Update

STAFF: Matthew Allen, Northern Buttes District Superintendent

SUBJECT: Northern Buttes District Update

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

II. BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

Northern Buttes District Superintendent Matthew Allen will present a report that provides an overview of the District.

III. ATTACHMENTS

- Staff Report
- Map of Northern Buttes District
- [Northern Buttes Website link](#)
- [Reimagine Bidwell Mansion SHP | MyInput](#)



CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING STAFF REPORT

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STAFF REPORT: Northern Buttes District Update
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SUBJECT: Northern Buttes District Update

OBJECTIVE

To provide the State Park and Recreation Commission with a high-level administrative and operational overview of the Northern Buttes District (NBD or District), featuring unit statistics, significant cultural and natural resources, and District highlights.

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Buttes District (NBD) is a sprawling and diverse landscape encompassing nine northern California counties. Our jurisdiction stretches across the northern Sacramento River valley, the rugged northern Sierra foothills, the volcanic Cascade mountains, and the ancient basin of Clear Lake, encompassing more than 27,000 square miles. The total State parkland within that area is approximately 45,700 acres.

From the roaring 129-foot cascades of McArthur-Burney Falls—famously dubbed the "eighth wonder of the world"—to the iconic silhouettes of the Sutter Buttes, often called the "smallest mountain range in the world," our district offers a tapestry of California's most remarkable landmarks. We manage a total of 15 units, including six State Parks (SP), five State Historic Parks (SHP), three State Recreation Areas (SRA), and one State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA).

The recreation opportunities within the district are as varied as the terrain itself. Visitors can enjoy world-class trout fishing in the upper Sacramento River, explore 90 miles of multi-use trails at Lake Oroville, boat into the volcanic wilderness of Ahjumawi, or experience centuries of cultural history at the oldest continuously used Chinese temple in California. Whether it is backcountry camping among 6,000-foot granite spires or staying the night on a floating campsite, NBD provides a premier destination for every type of outdoor enthusiast with visitation exceeding 1 million annually.

DESCRIPTION

The district can be divided into four strategic sector operations: Cascade, Valley, Lake Oroville, and Clear Lake.



Cascade Sector: Volcanic Spires and Sacred Springs

- **Castle Crags State Park:** Named for the dramatic 6,000-foot glacier-polished crags, this 3,904-acre park offers 28 miles of trails, 76 developed campsites and historic CCC-built infrastructure. Swimming and fishing in the upper Sacramento River are popular activities. The park is located just south of the community of Dunsmuir and is supported by the McArthur-Burney Falls Interpretive Association through their Friends of Castle Crags group.
- **McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial SP:** Centered on the spectacular 129-foot Burney Falls, which is fed by an underground spring and holds deep sacred significance for the Pit River Tribe. The 1,013-acre park offers 116 campsites, a group campground, primitive sites, and cabins, along with five miles of hiking trails and a section of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). Fun fact: Section O of the PCT is an 80-mile link between McArthur-Burney Falls MSP and Castle Crags SP. The park is located near the gateway community of Burney and is supported by the McArthur-Burney Falls Interpretive Association. In 2024, the park signed a MOU with the Pit River Tribe to promote shared stewardship of their ancestral lands. The park also has a long-standing concession that operates the camp store, cabins, and marina.
- **Ahjumawi Lava Springs SP:** This 6,400-acre park is accessible only by boat and protects one of the nation's largest freshwater spring systems. The park is named for the Ahjumawi people, an indigenous band of the Pit River Tribe who have lived there for thousands of years and still maintain cultural ties to the land. Camping is available at 3 designated environmental campgrounds with pit toilets with 3 campsites at each location. The park is nearest the communities of Fall River Mills and McArthur. The park was also included in the 2024 MOU with Pit River Tribe.
- **Shasta SHP:** Preserves the brick ruins of the "Queen City" of the northern mining district, featuring the restored 1861 Courthouse Museum and California artwork. The centerpiece of the park is the restored 1861 Courthouse Museum, which houses a visitor center, historical exhibits, and a large collection of California artwork, tours and interpretive programs. The park is located just east of Redding and is supported by the Town of Shasta Interpretive Association.
- **Weaverville Joss House SHP:** Protects the "Temple of the Forest Beneath the Clouds," the oldest continuously used Chinese temple in the State, serving as both a historic site and an active place of worship. Visitors can take guided tours starting from the visitor center, to see the temple's altars, artifacts, and ceremonial objects, as well as a museum that showcases a collection of art, mining tools, and other items from the Chinese community's history, including weapons from a historic 1854 Tong War. The park is within the community of Weaverville and supported by the Weaverville Joss House Association.

Valley Sector: Pioneer Legacies and River Restoration



- William B. Ide Adobe SHP: Located on the Sacramento River, this park commemorates a key figure in the 1846 Bear Flag Revolt and the sole president of the short-lived California Bear Republic. Visitors can enjoy a picnic area with views of the Sacramento River and explore the grounds to learn about 19th-century pioneer life through exhibits and robust living history educational programs. The park is location just on the outskirts of Red Bluff and is supported by the William B. Ide Interpretive Association.
- Bidwell Mansion SHP: The former home of Chico founders John and Annie Bidwell, currently undergoing the "Reimagine Bidwell Mansion" public engagement process following an arson fire in December 2024. Constructed between 1865 and 1868, the mansion was a cultural and social center of the Sacramento Valley, featuring modern amenities and hosting notable guests like President Rutherford B. Hayes and Susan B. Anthony. The park is located within Chico and is supported by the Bidwell Mansion Association.
- Woodson Bridge SRA: A 324-acre park featuring rare native riparian habitat and lush oak woodlands along the river. The park is adjacent to the Tehama County River Park and the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, which offers additional opportunities for day-use activities, boating, and wildlife viewing. The park is nearest to the community of Corning.
- Bidwell-Sacramento River SP: A 350-acres park composed of five distinct day-use areas, it focuses on protecting a significant riverine ecosystem. The park provides a variety of picnic areas, restrooms, and opportunities for hiking, birdwatching, and enjoying the scenic beauty of the river. The park is located between Chico and Hamilton City.
- Colusa-Sacramento River SRA: Operated by the City of Colusa, this 300-acre park offers a destination for fishing and Sacramento River access. The park has a variety of facilities for both day and overnight use, including 14 campsites, and is a popular destination for fishing, swimming, hiking, and birdwatching. The park is located within the community of Colusa.
- (Sutter Buttes) SP: Acquired in 2003, this 1,769-acre unit is focused on resource preservation; public inquiries regarding access are common due to its surrounding private land. There are limited opportunities for the public to experience the park's unique geology and cultural history. The public may book an interpretive hike provided by park staff as part of two winter-season birding events. The park is located west of the community of Live Oak and while the park has been classified as a "State Park" it has not been formally named.

Lake Oroville Sector: High-Volume Recreation

- Lake Oroville SRA: Spanning over 29,000 acres, it includes the nation's tallest earthen dam, unique floating campsites, and 168 miles of shoreline. There are numerous campgrounds for tents, RVs, horses, and boats along with multiple day-use areas that offer launch ramps for both motorized and non-motorized boats, picnic areas, and swimming beaches. In addition, the park provides approximately 90 miles of trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding, and historic features such as the Bidwell Bar Bridge and Toll House. The park is located in the community of Oroville and is supported by the Bidwell Bar Association. Lake Oroville SRA also has two of the largest concession-operated marinas in the California State Park System as well as a concession-operated aquatic center.



- Clay Pit SVRA: This SVRA originated from a large, shallow depression created by the excavation of clay used to construct the Oroville Dam. It is now a 220-acre open riding area for OHV enthusiasts, offering flat terrain ideal for beginners. The park is located just outside of Oroville.

Clear Lake Sector: Ancient Basin and Natural Preserves

- Clear Lake SP: Situated on California's largest natural lake, this 590-acre park offers premier birdwatching, boating, fishing, and camping. Facilities include four campgrounds offering a mix of campsites, some with lake views and some accessible, as well as 8 cabins. The park's day use facilities include a swim beach, boat launch, and picnic areas, while a visitor center provides information on the area's natural and cultural history. The park is nearest the communities of Kelseyville and Soda Bay and is supported by the Clear Lake State Park Interpretive Association. In 2024, the park signed a MOU with the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians.
- Anderson Marsh SHP: Protects 1,340 acres, including one of California's largest freshwater marshes and archaeological sites dating back over 10,000 years. In fact, the park is so rich with Native American cultural artifacts that the area was designated as the Anderson Marsh Archeological District in 1978. The majority of the park's 1,340 acres are classified as a Natural Preserve and offer hiking trails through diverse habitats like marshes, grasslands, and oak woodlands. The park is located between the communities of Clearlake and Lower Lake and is supported by the Anderson Marsh Interpretive Association. In 2017, State Parks signed its first tribal MOU with the Koi Nation as an outcome of the Department's new 2012 tribal consultation policy, and in 2023, State Parks signed its first tribal MOU renewal with the Koi.

Important Updates

- Reimagine Bidwell Mansion: On December 11, 2024, an arson fire destroyed the Bidwell Mansion. State Parks has launched the Reimagine Bidwell Mansion effort to gather community input on how the park will be revitalized. The planning effort will continue through 2026 and result in a Vision Plan that will integrate extensive community, tribal and stakeholder engagement with technical feasibility and existing conditions studies to identify the best path forward for the park. Further information and updates can be found at ReimagineBidwellMansion.org.
- Day-Use Reservations: Beginning May 1, 2026, McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park (Burney Falls) will require advanced reservations to visit the park on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, as well as summer holidays through September 30th. Reservations will not be required Monday through Thursday during this period. The goal of the reservation system is to help address overcrowding, resource and facility impacts, and to improve the visitor experience by spreading out visitation.
- General Planning: The Clear Lake State Park General Planning process is underway with the first Public Draft anticipated for release in April 2026. The Plan will be the primary managing document for Clear Lake State Park and will identify a vision for the park, with



supporting goals and guidelines. The Plan will also guide Park staff and managers in deciding future park development and resource management.

NEXT STEPS

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

Informational only

COMMISSION ACTION(S)

No action required.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Northern Buttes District](#)

www.ReimagineBidwellMansion.org



Northern Buttes District

