

**California Wilderness Coalition Center for Biological
Diversity Defenders of Wildlife Desert Protective Council
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Sierra Club**

August 30, 2007

Ruth Coleman, Director
Department of Parks and Recreation
1416 Ninth St., Room 1405
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Coleman:

We are writing this letter on behalf of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Sierra Club, Desert Protective Council, California Wilderness Coalition, Defenders of Wildlife, Center for Biological Diversity and numerous individuals who all have a keen interest in the future of Red Rock Canyon State Park and the Last Chance Addition. We are very pleased to hear that development of the General Plan Amendment has been revived, and we look forward to participating fully in that process.

We are deeply disappointed in the manner in which the previous effort was undermined and co-opted by off-road interests, and particularly offended that the Department allowed the OHV Division to essentially hijack the effort to adopt a General Plan Amendment that provided timely and essential protection for natural and cultural resources at Red Rock Canyon State Park. We are committed to ensuring that this does not happen a second time.

Documents we obtained under a Public Records Act request clearly show that, from the beginning, the planning process was corrupted by involving off-road interests while excluding conservationists. A letter very early in the process from Stan and Jeanie Haye informed State Parks of environmentalists who were just as familiar with routes in RRCSP and the addition as the off-roaders with whom the Department consulted, but the environmental interests were never contacted.

While a compromise ultimately was believed to have been reached on the General Plan Amendment, and a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was scheduled in December of 2005 for approval of the plan, the DPR documents clearly show that subsequent complaints by the off-road community to Deputy Director Daphne Greene resulted in the OHV Division wanting substantial changes to the compromise plan. Ms. Greene also took issue with recommendations by resource specialists; as a result, DPR staff was advised that the Director "wants all parts of the Department to agree on points of contention before re-starting the public process to finalize the General Plan." You, in effect, gave the OHV Division veto power over a General Plan Amendment for a state park unit.

The documents we obtained also outline a very disturbing situation within DPR, wherein you allowed the OHV Division to block interim environmental protections recommended by the Department's resource specialists, and to stall for years the adoption of a General Plan Amendment that provides the environmental and cultural resource protections for which the Last Chance Addition was transferred to the Department from Bureau of Land Management.

It is inexcusable that a small special interest group has been allowed to prevail over the recommendations of resource staff, resulting in serious compromising of valuable natural and cultural resources in a State Park that represents the best of California's natural and cultural history. It is even more disappointing that you directed your staff to respond to public inquiries regarding the delay with the "official position" of the Department being that it was "out of money and cannot move forward without new \$\$\$'s or the passage of a new bond act."¹ Indeed, this is precisely the story we were told when we inquired of the status of the GPA.

The public expects that in the future, the Department will comply with its stated mission:

To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve an unparalleled collection of culturally and environmentally sensitive structures and habitats, threatened plant and animal species, ancient Native American sites, historic structures and artifacts...the best of California's natural and cultural history.

As the Department develops and adopts a General Plan Amendment for the entire Red Rock Canyon State Park, we will accept no compromise of the above standards. The Department has the opportunity to revisit outdated management practices that have no legitimacy in a State Park unit, and which have resulted in intolerable damage to natural and cultural resources.

We intend to participate fully in the General Plan Amendment and request that you keep each of the below signatories fully informed of all meetings, notices, etc. We will not tolerate a repeat of the one-sided and biased process that has characterized this process for the past three years.

Sincerely

Karen Schambach

For:

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¹ Email from Gary Watts to Ted Jackson, dated 12/12/05

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