



NEVADA DIVISION
OF STATE PARKS



UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NEVADA DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

Robert Mergell, Administrator

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS

March 3, 2020

parks.nv.gov



NEVADA DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

Robert Mergell
Administrator

Dale Conner
Deputy
Administrator

Janice Keillor
Deputy
Administrator



The Division of State Parks develops and maintains a system of parks and recreation areas for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors while providing economic benefit to local communities. The Division also preserves and protects areas of scenic, historic and scientific importance to Nevada.

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Director



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**CONSERVATION &
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NEVADA STATE PARKS - OVERVIEW

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27 State Parks in 12 counties

→ Located in every topographic & geologic region



Totaling approx.
160,000 acres



129 permanent & 145 seasonal staff



3 Regions: Western, Southern, Eastern

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LINCOLN COUNTY STATE PARKS

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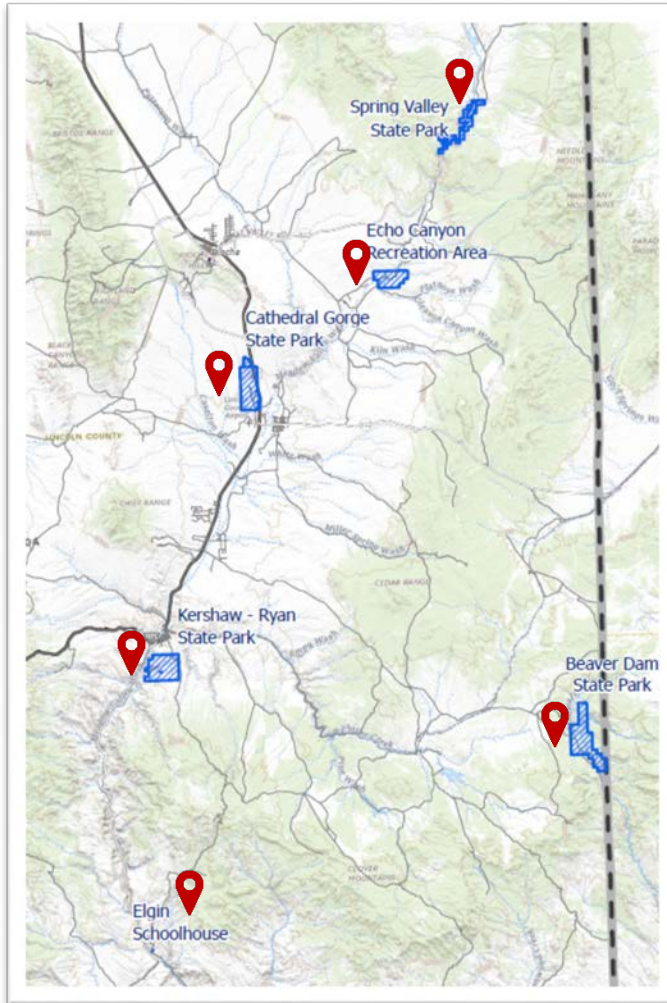
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- **280,000+** visitors in 2019
- Highest concentration of State Parks in NV (6 parks)
- In 1925, Cathedral Gorge was set aside as “State Recreational Grounds,” arguably making it the first Nevada State Park
- 3 of the first 4 official NV State Parks were in Lincoln County



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ECONOMIC IMPACT

- **\$160 million in visitor spending per year**
 - Fuel, lodging, food, gear, etc.
- **Out-of-state and overseas visitors nearly 50%**
- **Concessions and Commercial Use Permits**
 - Kayak rentals, Spring Mountain Ranch Super Summer Theater, Shakespeare at Sand Harbor, X-Terra Race at Spooner, nearly 1,000 weddings in 2019 at State Parks
- **Partnerships with County tourism offices and sporting goods retailers**
 - Bike races, fishing derbies, Fire & Ice





NEW WORLD-CLASS TRAIL SYSTEM AT KERSHAW RYAN

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- **Epic** mountain biking destination
- More than **40 miles** of single track mountain bike trails under construction in Lincoln County's high desert
- 12 miles of trail complete at **Kershaw-Ryan State Park**
- Area's terrain & beauty create unmatched mountain biking experiences
- **Grand Opening** of connected trail system – fall 2020



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Lincoln County Mountain Bike Trails Video:
<https://youtu.be/fnfWOI-tptQ>

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WALKER RIVER STATE RECREATION AREA

- 28 miles of pristine river corridor is now open to the public for outdoor adventures
- Includes the Pitchfork Ranch, Rafter 7 Ranch, Flying M Ranch, and Nine Mile Ranch
- Offers fishing, hunting, off-road exploration, camping, nature trails, interpretive displays, and visitor center
 - Coming soon! Rustic and remote cabins for that popular “glamping” experience
 - Opportunity to incorporate OHV facilities
- Official “Water Trail” established on the East Walker River, includes kayak/canoe put-ins & take-outs





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WALKER RIVER STATE RECREATION AREA

Rafter 7 Ranch

- Upgraded water system to meet code
- Currently purchasing 2 cabins
- Next steps focus on fire suppression to main house to meet code



Flying M Ranch

- Assumed operation and management of Flying M Ranch on February 1, 2020
- Assessing staffing and budget needs, deferred maintenance, converting to public water system, interpretative programming/oral history



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ICE AGE FOSSILS STATE PARK

315-acre park features a portion of the Las Vegas wash that is rich in paleontological and historic resources

- Parking lot is complete, utilities are in place
- February 2020: New Visitors Center broke ground
- September 2020: Estimated completion date





SPOONER LAKE - LAKE TAHOE NEVADA STATE PARK

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Project designed to carry out a component of the SR 28 Master Plan

- Next phase of East Shore Trail will connect Sand Harbor to Spooner
- Phase I development: new visitors center and amphitheater – construction expected to begin spring 2020
- Phase II improvements: reconfigured parking, group use areas, redesigned maintenance facilities (*currently unfunded*)

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SPOONER LAKE – SR 28 CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

- SR 28 is a 10-mile stretch along East Shore of Tahoe – one of **Nevada's most congested** recreation corridors
- Master Plan envisions environmental, public safety, and recreation improvements, including:
 - Bike paths and parking areas
 - Underground utilities
 - Forest health improvements
 - Facility improvements
- Partnership among private, state, local, federal agencies





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NEW AMENITIES

- **WiFi** access added to numerous state parks
- **Self pay stations** – 19 new stations coming soon
- **Additional full hook-up RV sites:**
 - 29 at Washoe Lake
 - 25 at South Fork
 - 23 at Spring Valley
 - 15 at Kershaw-Ryan
- **Rental cabins:**
 - 3 cabins can be rented at Wild Horse
 - 4 cabins planned for Pitchfork
 - 2 cabins planned for Rafter 7





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PROJECT FUNDING

Partnerships:

- Federal, State, County, Non-profit, Local

Grant Opportunities:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Recreational Trails Program (RTP)
- Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP)
- Lake Tahoe License Plate Program (LTLPP)

Bond Sales:

- Conservation Bonds (Q1)
- Environmental Improvement Program (EIP)
- Capital Improvement Planning (CIP)

Future project feasibility will be heavily impacted by bond sales connected to the Conservation and Resource Protection Grant Program, as well as CIP consideration



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OUTDOOR RECREATION IS *BOOMING!*

In 2019, State Parks had a **record-breaking** 4.1 million visitors (up from 3.7 million in 2018)

Increased visitation → Opportunity to maximize experiences

- Engage youth
- Educate visitors
- Enhance access to underserved communities
- Improve health and quality of life
- Increase local economic opportunity



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DIVISION CHALLENGES

- Backlog of deferred maintenance
- Preventative & immediate maintenance needs
- Promoting safety-conscious culture among staff
- Overcrowding in popular parks
- Seasonal staffing
- Incorporating technology into park operations & outdoor recreation
 - Reservations/App development





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State Parks Overview Video:

<https://www.facebook.com/NVStateParks/videos/2574899032632479/>

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QUESTIONS?

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