Calif. leaders vow to revamp state parks

By KCRA-TV

A group of California business, education and nonprofit leaders – including Monterey Bay Aquarium founding director Julie Packard – have agreed to help revamp the state parks system in an effort to restore confidence and financial stability to an institution rocked by scandal.

The dozen volunteers will spend the next 18 months addressing the problems that led to the state threatening to close 70 of the 280 parks in the system after long years of funding shortages – and more recent revelations that now-departed leaders socked money in a secret fund.

The Parks Forward Commission will design a blueprint to make the park system financially viable by studying everything from potential revenue sources to whether a lack of innovation at the top is tied to the practice of promoting only law enforcement rangers to leadership positions.

“Under the weight of budget cuts, added acreage and outmoded systems, our parks are struggling to meet the needs of Californians, and visitors from around the country and world,” said John Laird, secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. “This is a top-notch panel that will roll up its sleeves to craft a long-term plan for a financially sustainable and functionally relevant state parks system that meets the needs of a changing population.”

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