

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Trudy Thomas
760.434.7930

The Right to Pay for but Not Enjoy Public Lands

(Note: Years ago the delegates at State Session voted to automatically oppose any bond issue that does not generate enough income to pay for itself, i.e: CalVet programs. The following Guest Editorial by State Senator Bill Morrow shows the wisdom in that decision.)

by Senator Bill Morrow, 38th District

Since 2000, Californians have approved billions of dollars of public bonds under the umbrella of "Safe Neighborhood Parks." Proposition 12 and 40 bond acts generated a total of \$4.7 billion. **These bond acts were sold to California voters as a means to fund local and regional parks.**

Is the State using all this money to fund local and regional parks?

NO!

Of the \$4.7 billion, approximately \$3 billion or 63.5% is slated for various state agencies for other projects. An analysis of these projects indicates that these dollars are being spent on "habitat preservation projects," which often include land acquisitions. (See following analysis of Propositions 40 and 12.)

Analysis shows that of Proposition 12's \$2,100,000,000, only \$845,600,000 goes towards the advertised use. \$1,254,500,000 goes toward projects the public cannot access or use. Of Proposition 40's \$2,600,000,000 only \$870,000,000 are used for the advertised purposes, leaving \$1,730,000,000 of your money being used for public inaccessible purposes.

Since 2000, the State has approved the expenditure of over \$460.2 million for the purchase of 280,030 acres of land. In FY 2000/2001 the state approved approximately \$124 million for 90,264 acres in land acquisitions for habitat protection or conservation. In FY 2001/2002 the state approved \$176.5 million for 120,063 acres in land acquisitions. Through May of 2003 the state approved \$160.1 million for 69,693 acres in land acquisitions.

Is it appropriate that State acquire hundreds of thousand of acres of land from "willing sellers" for habitat protection? Is it appropriate that the State provide grants to conservancies for land acquisition and conservation easements? Is the public allowed reasonable access to these lands? Have management plans been developed through public participation? It is reasonable to ask these questions because Proposition 12 has a provision in Public Resources Code Section 5096.350 (b) which states: **"Not more than 5 percent of the funds authorized for expenditure by this section may be used for public access and wildlife-oriented public use projects."** This means that of the \$265.5 million, only about \$13.3 million may be spent on public use projects. This is only one example of the direction that the state is going in providing hundreds of millions of dollars for habitat preservation with out public access.

What You Don't Know Can Empty Your Wallet

What is the actual cost of these Propositions? Proposition 12 and 13 Bond Acts passed when the state was awash in revenue. Proposition 40 and 50 Bond Acts passed the state had wiped out the

surplus. The question worth asking is: Is the cost of these bonds more than was estimated to the public on the ballot? The ballot also indicated that the cost to maintain these parks and land acquisitions could be as much as \$10 million annually. What has been the actual cost to the State and local communities to manage and maintain these public land acquisitions?

A total of \$400 million was allocated for matching grants to communities for new park projects. However, counties and cities are not willing to establish parks without the ability to provide routine maintenance and long term capital improvements. In Fresno County, a \$1.5 million new park project for a rural community was approved, provided that a funding source is established for the maintenance and future capital improvements. The project never went forward because the community would not agree to the dollars needed to maintain the new park through the formation of a special district that would add \$30 annually to their property tax bill.

As noted in the bond acts, the State is required to appropriate from the General Fund amounts that pay both the principle and the interest on bonds as they are due. How many bonds have been sold and at what cost to the General Fund? These bond acts also allow the Director of Finance to withdraw from the General Fund any amount of unsold bonds that does not exceed the authorized bond amounts. Has the Director of Finance accessed the General Fund to cover land acquisitions or conservation easements under Propositions 12 and 40 for which bonds have not been sold?

Pssst! Hey, You Wanna Buy A Bridge?

The public has been sold a bill of goods. Californians have financed billions of dollars of land they will never use, which is like buying a house they will never live in and their children will continue to pay the mortgage. As evidenced by the passage of these bond acts, the public believes in and wants local and regional parks and open space for recreation and conservation. However, the billions of dollars spent on habitat protection will never provide access to what the public thought they were buying for themselves and future generations.

Prop 40		Sub section		Prop 12		TOTAL
\$2.6 BILLION				\$2.1 BILLION		
PRC 5096.600				PRC 5096.310		
Dept. of Parks 50% for Acquisitions	\$225,000,000	615		\$502,750,000	(a)	
Volunteer participation				\$4,000,000	(c)	
Grants to local agencies adm parks				\$20,000,000	(d)	
Competitive grants (5096.10 & 5096.335)				\$10,000,000	(e)	
Cultural resources stewardship projects				\$18,000,000	(b)	
DEPT. OF PARKS SUBTOTAL			\$225,000,000			\$554,750,000
Local Parks	\$832,500,000	620		\$588,000,000	(e) (f)	\$1,420,500,620
Land, Air & Water Conservation Program including land acquisitions	\$1,275,000,000	650				
WCB		650(a)	\$300,000,000	\$265,500,000	(m) *	\$565,500,000
Conservation Program		650(b)	\$445,000,000			
State Costal Conserv			\$200,000,000	\$220,400,000	(o)	\$420,400,000
CA Tahoe Conserv			\$40,000,000	\$50,000,000	(n)	\$90,000,000
Santa Monica Mt. Conserv			\$40,000,000	\$35,000,000	(p)	\$75,000,000
Coachella Valley Mt. Conserv.			\$20,000,000	\$5,000,000	(q)	\$25,000,000
San Joaquin River Conserv.			\$25,000,000	\$15,000,000	(r)	\$40,000,000
San Gabriel & LA River & Mt. Conserv.			\$40,000,000			\$25,000,000
Baldwin Hills Conserv			\$40,000,000			\$40,000,000
SF Bay Area Consv			\$40,000,000			\$40,000,000
Subtotal			\$445,000,000			
Protection of Water Resources		650(c)	\$375,000,000	\$10,000,000	(h)	\$385,000,000
State Air Resources Board			\$50,000,000			\$50,000,000
CA Conservation Corps			\$20,000,000	\$15,000,000	(k) (s)	\$35,000,000
Preservation of Ag & Oak Woodlands			\$75,000,000			\$75,000,000
CDF			\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	(u)	\$20,000,000
Historical & Cultural Resources	\$267,500,000	652(a)				\$267,500,000
Prop. 40 TOTAL	\$2,600,000,000					
Nonmotorized trails				\$10,000,000	(i)	
Parks for significant poverty areas				\$100,000,000	(j)	
Zoos, Museums, Wildlife Facilities				\$71,500,000	(l) (1)	
Grants for soccer & baseball fac.				\$15,000,000	(l) (2)	
Dept. of Fish & Game				\$12,000,000	(v)	
Dept. of Conservation (5096.356)				\$25,000,000	(t)	

Chap 4.5 Section 31160	\$30,000,000	(w)	
Integrated Waste Management Board	\$7,000,000	(x)	
Northern CA Park	\$15,000,000	(y)	
Sierra Nevada Cascade Program	\$6,250,000	(z)(1)	
River Parkways	\$33,500,000	(z)	
Kern River parkway		(2)	\$2,500,000
Santa Clarita Watershed Land Acq.			\$1,000,000
Sac River in Yolo Glenn & Colusa			\$3,000,000
Visitor Center American River			\$2,000,000
Sonoma Resource Conservation	\$2,000,000	(z)	
Community centers, veterans park	\$1,100,000	(3)	
Camp Arroyo, Alameda County	\$2,000,000	(z)	
Wildhaven Center, San Berdo Mts.	\$1,000,000	(4)	
TOTAL PROP 12	\$2,100,000,000	(z)	
		(5)	
		(6)	

		Total Bond \$	Difference
Prop 12 local parks programs	\$845,500,000	\$2,100,000,000	\$1,254,500,000
Prop 40 local park programs	\$870,000,000	\$2,600,000,000	\$1,730,000,000
	\$1,715,500,000	\$4,700,000,000	\$2,984,500,000
0.635			

* Note: Section 5096.350 (b) states:
 Not more than 5 percent of the funds authorized
 for
 expenditure by this section may be used for
 public access and wildlife-oriented public use
 projects

That means that only \$13,275,000
 can be spent for public use.