



A Message from AMIA to Supporters of Anderson Marsh State Historic Park about the Department of Parks and Recreation Funds Scandal

Many of you may have already heard the news, but for those of you who haven't, the director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) has resigned and a deputy was fired after it was discovered that State Parks had been hiding nearly \$54 million in "surplus" money for the past 12 years, while parks such as Anderson Marsh were threatened with closure over budget cuts. So far there are no accusations that taxpayer money is missing.

We at AMIA are of course shocked and angry that at a time when our Park was faced with looming closure and significant deferred maintenance, funds that could have been used to help keep our Park open and available to the public were allowed to sit unused in a secret fund.

We all have the right to expect honesty from our government. The top leadership at State Parks has let down the members of the Lake County community who have been working to help keep Anderson Marsh State Historic Park open.

AMIA's commitment is simple – we are dedicated to preserving and making available to the public the natural, cultural and historical resources located at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park. The support all of you have provided so far has enabled us to prevent the Park from closing as scheduled, and to get a commitment that our Park will not close – as long as we are in negotiations with State Parks to enter into an "operating agreement" that will allow AMIA to take over the partial operation of the Park, using its own funds and the efforts of AMIA volunteers.

This would have not have been possible without the hard work, loyalty and commitment to Anderson Marsh State Historic Park that has been shown by our local State Parks Rangers and employees, in particular Bill Salata, the Lake County Sector Superintendent. Bill has worked with us all along the way to help delay the closure of the Park while we could figure out how to get organized to operate the Park.

AMIA urges all of its supporters to remember that whatever the actions of the top leaders of the Department of Parks and Recreation, the local Park employees are working under extremely difficult conditions and need to be given our support. We need to also continue to support the Parks themselves, and in our view, Anderson Marsh State Historic Park in particular. These parks belong to us, the people of California, and we must act to protect what is ours.

How does this affect the funds donated to AMIA to help keep the Park open?

AMIA is an independent, entirely volunteer-run, nonprofit organization. We work with, but not for State Parks by helping to support the operation of Anderson Marsh State Historic Park. Our

funds belong to us and cannot be spent for any purpose without the approval the AMIA Board of Directors. State Parks has no access to AMIA funds in any way.

Under the type of operating agreement being negotiated, AMIA will not pay any money to State Parks or to the State of California so that State Parks can operate Anderson Marsh State Historic Park. AMIA rejected the idea of such a “donor” agreement early on in the negotiations. Instead, AMIA is negotiating an agreement that will allow AMIA to raise money to directly “pay the bills” to run the Park, and to decide for itself how to take care of the responsibilities of maintaining the utilities, buildings, grounds and trail systems located at the Park. Every dime donated to AMIA is and will be used to maintain and operate Anderson Marsh State Historic Park, and to fund the educational and interpretive activities of AMIA. All decisions about where money will be spent will be made by the community members that serve on the AMIA Board.

How does what has happened affect our efforts to preserve and protect Anderson Marsh State Historic Park?

Right now, we have no idea whether any of the money that has been “found” will be used to keep Parks open, or for how long, or whether this money will be simply returned to the California general fund. Even if it can be used to help some parks threatened with closure, the crisis that led to closures will not have disappeared, even if a one-time infusion of cash occurs.

AMIA is resolved, therefore, to continue its drive to enter into an operating agreement with State Parks that will allow Anderson Marsh State Historic Park to remain open (at least for the next three years) despite the shifting finances of the State of California.

Regardless of how this recent discovery turns out, your financial support of AMIA and Anderson Marsh State Historic Park has already resulted in the Park remaining open. It has also allowed AMIA to continue to provide opportunities for the members of the public, school field trips and senior tours to become connected with the important Lake County natural habitats and cultural history found at the Park.

AMIA’s vision is not only to keep the Park open as it is, but to work to improve the facilities at the Park and to take care of some of the maintenance issues that have been ignored for so long. If it turns out that our Park is temporarily taken off the closure list and funds that would have gone to pay the electricity bills can go instead to perform vital repairs, we will be celebrating.

Meanwhile, AMIA will continue to negotiate a deal with the state, and will continue with its plan to create a community-wide effort to “protect what’s ours.”

We will let you know any developments as we learn them.

Sincerely,

Henry Bornstein, Treasurer
Anderson Marsh Interpretive Association