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AB-618 State parks: reservations. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Bill No. 618

CHAPTER 536

An act to add Section 5010.1.5 to, and to add and repeal Section 5010.1.6 of, the Public Resources Code, relating to state parks.

[Approved by Governor October 08, 2023. Filed with Secretary of State October 08, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 618, Bauer-Kahan. State parks: reservations.

Existing law establishes the Department of Parks and Recreation and vests the department with control of the state park system. Existing law authorizes the department, whenever significant savings can be achieved, to enter into a contract with any natural person, corporation, partnership, or association for the operation of a reservation system for the state park system and for the collection of state park fees in connection therewith.

This bill would require any contract the department enters into, on and after January 1, 2024, for purposes of managing the department's reservation system, to reflect specified rules, authorizations, and requirements, including, among other things, that a reservationholder who cancels a reservation within 2 to 6 calendar days before the reservation start date may forfeit the cost of the reservation for the first night plus any reservation fees. The bill would require the department to, on or before January 1, 2025, implement a reservation drawing for up to 5 of the most popular units of the state park system, as provided. The bill would require the department to report, on or before January 1, 2028, on the outcomes of the reservation drawing to the Legislature. The bill would repeal the above-mentioned provisions regarding the reservation drawing on January 1, 2029.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 5010.1.5 is added to the Public Resources Code, to read:

5010.1.5. (a) On and after January 1, 2024, any contract the department enters into for purposes of managing the department's reservation system pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 5010.1 shall reflect the rules, authorizations, and requirements of this section.

(b) For units of the state park system operated by the department, the department may restrict a person from reserving a site under any of the following circumstances:

- (1) For more than seven consecutive nights during peak season.
- (2) If the person has occupied a site at the same unit proposed for reservation for more than 30 days in a calendar year.

(3) (A) By using the online reservation system if the person failed to show up for at least three reservations in one calendar year.

(B) The person's ability to reserve a site using the online reservation system may resume within one calendar year from the date of the reservationholder's third failure to show up for a reservation.

(C) This paragraph shall not apply to reservations and occupation of sites obtained using walkup reservations or first-come-first-served systems.

(c) A reservationholder who cancels a reservation seven calendar days or more before the reservation start date shall receive a refund of the cost of the reservation, excluding any reservation fees.

(d) A reservationholder who cancels a reservation within two to six calendar days before the reservation start date may forfeit the cost of the reservation for the first night plus any reservation fees.

(e) A reservationholder who cancels a reservation or fails to show up within 24 hours of the reservation start date may forfeit the entire cost of the reservation plus any reservation fees.

(f) A reservationholder may either show up or provide notice of late arrival to staff at the state park unit where the reservation is held within 24 hours of the reservation start date in order to avoid forfeiting the entire cost of the reservation.

(g) A camp or lodging site for which the reservationholder cancels a reservation three calendar days or more before the reservation start date may be made available for reservation through the online reservation system.

(h) A reservationholder shall receive at least two reminders via email or another form of communication, as follows:

(1) Ten days before the reservation start date, that informs the reservationholder of cancellation at least seven days before the reservation start date to receive a refund of the cost of the reservation, excluding any reservation fees.

(2) Four days before the reservation start date, informing the reservationholder of cancellation within three calendar days of the reservation start date to avoid the forfeiture of one night of reservation costs plus any reservation fees.

(i) As part of the communication described in subdivision (h), a reservationholder shall be informed that the entire cost of the reservation plus any reservation fees may be forfeited if the reservationholder does either of the following:

(1) Cancels within 24 hours of the reservation start date.

(2) Fails to either show up or notify staff at the state park unit where the reservation is held of a late arrival no later than 24 hours following the reservation start date.

(j) Forfeited reservation costs, as described in subdivisions (d) and (e), shall be deposited into the State Parks and Recreation Fund, established pursuant to Section 5010, and may be used, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for purposes of deferred maintenance projects.

(k) This section shall only apply to a camp or lodging site that uses the reservation system described in subdivision (b) of Section 5010.1.

SEC. 2. Section 5010.1.6 is added to the Public Resources Code, to read:

5010.1.6. (a) On or before January 1, 2025, the department shall implement a reservation drawing for up to five of the most popular units of the state park system. The department shall determine the top units for purposes of this section based on units that have the most booking interest six months before the reservation date.

(b) At any unit of the state park system described in subdivision (a), the department may continue to use the reservation system authorized pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 5010.1 and as described in Section 5010.1.5 for a subset of camping or lodging sites within the state park unit for purposes of providing an analysis between the reservation drawing process established by this section and existing reservation system processes.

(c) (1) On or before January 1, 2028, the department shall provide a report to the Legislature on the outcomes of the reservation drawing established pursuant to subdivision (a), including, if pursued by the department, any analysis obtained pursuant to subdivision (b).

(2) A report submitted to the Legislature pursuant to this subdivision shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

(d) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2029, and as of that date is repealed.