

SDC OPEN SPACE NEWSLETTER



ISSUE NO 3 | JULY 2026



Photo by: California Natural Resources Agency

WELCOME!



The following message comes from the [California Natural Resources Agency](#).

July is **Disability Pride Month**, an annual celebration of differing abilities that connects back to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, a ruling prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities. This is a time to honor and uplift the identities, resilience and contributions of disabled people across our country.

The disability pride flag colors symbolize a variety of experiences:

- **Red:** physical disabilities
- **Gold:** cognitive and intellectual disabilities
- **White:** nonvisible and undiagnosed disabilities
- **Blue:** psychiatric disabilities
- **Green:** sensory disabilities
- **Black:** honoring those who have died due to negligence, suicide, rebellion, illness, and eugenics

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Want to know more about some upcoming special events? Check out our event calendar and see how YOU can get involved!

Contact us:
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State Park Interpreter I (PI)
Carmen.Vanni@parks.ca.gov

Featured Article: Disability Pride in California State Parks



Photo by: California Natural Resources Agency

The California Natural Resources Agency, which is the parent agency for the Department of Parks & Recreation, is proud to celebrate Disability Pride Month this July 2026. The theme this year is "The World Works Better with Us", a powerful reminder of what disabled people bring to our workspaces, parks, communities, schools, and more. The California Natural Resources Agency is celebrating the month with five special events; three in-person events at their office in Sacramento and two virtual events. [You can check the event details here.](#) The California State Parks WordPress blog also has two pieces on accessibility in parks; you can read them [here](#) and [here](#).

Do you want to visit our state parks at a reduced cost? See if you qualify for the [Disabled Discount Pass](#), a lifetime pass for individuals with permanent disabilities, entitling the passholder to a 50% discount on vehicle day-use, family camping, and boat-use fees. [You can look for parks accepting the pass here.](#) Navigate to the "Open Filter" button to the right of the search bar and check "Disabled Discount Pass". Applications can be submitted at the [Bay Area District Office](#) in Petaluma or [online](#).

Here at Sonoma Developmental Center Open Space, we are celebrating Disability Pride Month by diversifying our guided hike program into two separate programs: an ADA Accessible Guided Hike and a Lake Suttonfield Guided Hike. These programs will keep occurring after Disability Pride Month is over.

The ADA Accessible Guided Hike covers the Sunrise/Baker loop, which is a flat, 45-to-50-minute hike around the easternmost side of the property with slight elevation changes and light shade. The loop passes by several pieces of historic infrastructure once used by the SDC such as a farm, a horse corral, the dairy, various maintenance buildings, the sewage treatment plant, and the soccer field to name a few.

The eastern side of the property was mainly used for animal husbandry and facility management, which all contributed to the SDC being a true self-sustaining community for a time. The loop acts as a perimeter to a beautiful seasonal wetland, while it is surrounded by various types of oak and pine trees on the outside. We hope that this hike will be both a welcoming introduction and celebration of disability history and access in California State Parks.

Additionally, while not on an ADA trail, SDCOS interpreters are eager to invite visitors to discover the natural beauty of Lake Suttonfield, a historic man-made reservoir that is now a beloved hiking destination for Glen Ellen locals. The trail is about 2.5 miles in length with small elevation changes and is unpaved. While hiking, visitors can expect to see several types of freshwater birds, perching birds, woodpeckers, and birds of prey. There are also a variety of shrubs, wildflowers, aquatic life, bugs, and many more types of flora and fauna to discover.

We want visitors to walk away with a finer understanding of the cultural and natural history of Sonoma Developmental Center Open Space. A major idea we are hoping to explore in the park is "rehabilitation". How can nature be healing? What opportunities does it offer to

communities? How can we learn from the history of the land? These are some of the questions we are asking ourselves as we interpret the property. We hope that through interpretation, visitors will be able to discover the rehabilitative qualities of the SDC Open Space and continue to appreciate the service it provides to the local community.

If you have any questions, comments, anecdotes, or suggestions about accessibility regarding SDCOS park land, programming, or communications, please contact us via email at Carmen.Vanni@parks.ca.gov or call the Bay Area District Office at (707)769-5652.

What is the Latest News on the Cannabis Watershed Protection Program (CWPP) at SDCOS?

Bay Area District Staff are steadily progressing on the installation of interpretive panels in the property. On Wednesday, July 15th, Bay Area District staff met with interpreters from the CWPP in person at SDCOS to tour the eastern side of the property and discuss potential themes, locations, and accessibility features for the panels. Further meetings will be scheduled to confirm what was discussed in the park.

In other news, the Cannabis Watershed Protection Program has launched “(Re)Turning to the River”, a podcast focused on watershed stories. Episodes are uploaded every two weeks in English and Spanish. You can learn more about it [here](#).

News & Updates

Bay Area District, Partner, and HQ Staff see SDCOS in Guided Hike

State Park Interpreter I Carmen Vanni was pleasantly surprised to see Bay Area District, Jack

London Park Partners, and California State Parks Headquarters Staff attend a guided hike in the park on Saturday, July 11th at 10 AM. The group of 8 explored the Sunrise/Baker loop and visited the historic farm while also learning about our endangered wetlands. After a short break, a smaller group explored the perimeter of Lake Suttonfield and was lucky enough to observe a family of American coots swimming in the lake. The hikers had a wonderful time exploring the eastern side of the SDC Open Space. We hope to see more attend a guided hike in the future!

No Prescribed Burns Planned During Fire Season

The Bay Area District Wildfire & Forest Resilience Program managers have announced that they will be pausing any fire management at SDCOS for the remainder of fire season, usually between the months of June/July and October/November.

Calendar of Events

July

- **Saturday, July 11th & 18th – ADA Accessible Guided Hike**
 - Celebrate Disability Pride Month by joining us for a beginner-friendly hike on newly acquired State Park land at the Sonoma Developmental Center Open Space! Meet at the intersection of Harney and Railroad in Eldridge, California at 10 AM. Water, hats, and sturdy shoes are recommended. This hike includes ADA accessible trails. Park does not charge for entry.
- **Saturday, July 25th – “The People of Eldridge” Lecture by E. Breck Parkman**
 - Come and join Breck Parkman at the Sonoma Community Center (Room 110) from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM to hear a collection of biographies of more than 100 former SDC staff members. Hear firsthand accounts of SDC workers between the 1920s and 1940s!

August

- **Saturday, August 1st – ADA Accessible Guided Hike**
 - See July 11th & 18th event description.
- **Saturday, August 8th – Lake Suttonfield Guided Hike**
 - Check out the new Sonoma Developmental Center Open Space by hiking around the beautiful Lake Suttonfield! Meet at the intersection of Harney and Railroad in Eldridge, California at 10 AM. Water, hats, and sturdy shoes are recommended. This easy to moderate hike is about 2.5 miles in length on unpaved trail with slight elevation changes. Hike is expected to last about 1.5 hours. Park does not charge for entry.
- **Saturday, August 8th – Nature & Community Fair**
 - Enjoy an evening of nature and community by visiting over two dozen booths hosted by county, state, and national environmental and community groups in the historic downtown Sonoma plaza! This free event runs from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM and is family friendly.
- **Saturday, August 22nd – “Bark Ranger” Pop-Up Event**
 - Do you love walking your dog at your local state park? Check out our Bark Ranger pop-up tent at SDCOS on Sunrise/Baker Road from 9 AM to 12 PM and learn how your pup can become a Bark Ranger!

September

- **Saturday, September 12th – BioBlitz for California Biodiversity Day 2026**
 - What species call our park home? Let's explore together! Help us develop a species list for our newest property via iNaturalist! Meet at the intersection of Harney and Railroad at 10 AM on Saturday, September 12th and explore Lake Suttonfield together.

Want to see more exciting and educational events in other nearby California State Parks? Find your next adventure by [checking out the CSP event calendar!](#)

Photo Gallery



Caption: A family of American Coots. July 11th, 2026

Photo by: Carmen Vanni, California State Parks



Caption: Hikers walk through the old farm at SDCOS. July 11th, 2026

Photo by: April Farnham, California State Parks

DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH

"The World is Better with Us" is this year's Disability Pride Month theme. This theme is about inclusion and truly being part of the world around us, at work, in our communities, in our spiritual and cultural spaces, and in everyday life. Persons with disabilities have so much to offer. Their experiences and perspectives help make our workplace, and the world better. This month is a reminder of the value people with disabilities bring and the importance of creating spaces where everyone can thrive.

Ice Cream Social Hour

Wednesday, July 8, 2026 | Noon-1 pm
CNRA Headquarters, 20th Floor Café
715 P Street, Sacramento

Join us for a gathering of sweet connection in honor of Disability Pride Month! A relaxed Ice Cream Social Hour will be hosted. All potluck items are welcome – sweet or savory. Bring your favorite topping, candy, treat, sauce, ice cream "vehicle" (cone or bowl), fruit, or even a savory snack if ice cream is not your thing.

EmPOWERment Park Clean Up

Saturday, July 11, 2026 | 8-10:30 am
emPOWERment Park, 1124 Bell Street, Sacramento
(Corner of Bell Street and Clinton Road)

Come join the CNRA Disability Advisory Committees (DACs) and the Mission Oaks Park District to help with some light clean-up and prep work at the new emPOWERment Park in Sacramento! Please bring work gloves if you have them, wear closed toe shoes, long pants, and a long sleeve shirt for safety and comfort. [Register online.](#)

Secretary Speaker Series The World Works Better with Us: The Power of Leaders with Disabilities

Thursday, July 16, 2026 | Noon-1 pm
Virtual, Register Online

Join Secretary Wade Crowfoot and leaders from across California for a conversation inspired by this year's theme, "The World Works Better With Us." Through personal stories and discussion, panelists will explore how perspectives from the disabled community strengthen workplaces, communities, outdoor recreation, and public policy. They will reflect on the progress achieved, the impact of recent federal policy changes, and the shared responsibility of building a California where everyone can participate, contribute, and thrive. [Register online.](#)

Lunchtime Fidget, Focus, and Fun Game Day

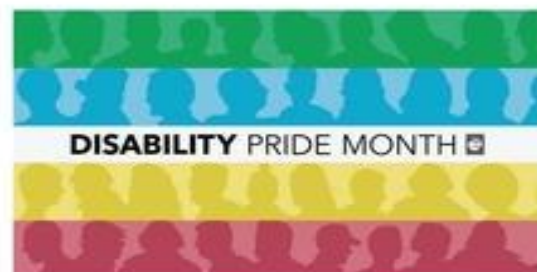
Thursday, July 16, 2026 | Noon-1 pm
CNRA Headquarters, Lobby
715 P Street, Sacramento

Come join us during lunchtime to learn about fidget toys! Fidgets are for everyone and create a sensory experience that redirects the focus from anxiety and stress to calmness and play.

Disability Pride Month Career Panel

Tuesday, July 28, 2026 | Noon-1 pm
Virtual, Register Online

Please join the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) for an engaging panel discussion featuring state workers with disabilities who have achieved significant career success, along with an organization dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities in reaching their professional goals. Panelists will share their experiences, discuss strategies for navigating the workplace, and highlight efforts to advance equity, inclusion, accessibility, and positive change across state government. [Register online.](#)



Resources.ca.gov/DisabilityPride



Image by: California Natural Resources Agency



Caption: A photograph of Sunrise Road on the east side of the Sonoma Developmental Center Open Space property. Photograph by: Carmen Vanni, California State Parks



Caption: A photograph of the Lake Suttonfield loop trail on the east side of the Sonoma Developmental Center Open Space property. Photograph by: Carmen Vanni, California State Parks

(Re)Turning to the River

a podcast focused on watershed stories



Caption: Cover artwork for the California State Parks podcast Series (Re)Turning to the River.

Image by: California State Parks



SHARE YOUR SPACE PHOTO CONTEST

Capture your park moments. Win prizes. Get featured.

ENTER IN 3 STEPS

1. Visit any California State Park
2. Take your best shot
3. Submit in the OuterSpatial app



CATEGORIES

Submit up to 5 photos (one per category):



SCAN TO ENTER!



Submit pictures
June 5 -August 1, 2026.



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