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Wednesday, April 28, 2010

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Green

A Blog About Energy and the Environment



April 28, 2010, 10:01 am

Cherished Parks Closing in Arizona

By [JOHN COLLINS RUDOLF](#)



Arizona State Parks Lyman

Lake State Park is closed but is scheduled to reopen from May to September.



Desperate to narrow one of the worst state budget gaps in the nation, Arizona legislators have slashed their parks budget by 80 percent in the last two years, leaving more than a third of the 30 state parks closed or facing closure in coming months.

The latest cuts, totaling \$8.6 million, left the parks system with just \$7.5 million for operations and maintenance, which led to the closings, a park system spokeswoman said. Some of the parks closing are among the state's best-known attractions.

Picacho Peak, a 1,500-foot mountain visible from the highway between Tucson and Phoenix, is scheduled to shut its gates at the beginning of June. Red Rock State Park, near Sedona, will also close in June. The Homolovi Ruins, a collection of dozens of ancient Anasazi dwellings northeast of Phoenix, is already off limits to the public.

A vote by the state parks board in January would have closed 21 of 30 parks. But local governments and individual donors have opened their wallets to keep a number of parks running.

One tourist from Texas [is reported to have donated](#) \$8,000 to Lost Dutchman State Park, enough to keep it open for one month. (The park is nonetheless scheduled to close in June.)

Payson, Ariz., population 15,000, has dedicated \$25,000 in municipal funds to keep Tonto Natural Bridge, a major local attraction, open to tourists through September.

For some rural communities, keeping nearby state parks afloat is an act of self-preservation. Arizona's state parks bring more than \$250 million in tourism dollars annually to rural counties, according to the Arizona parks department.

A proposal that would raise money for the embattled park system by adding \$12 to state vehicle registration fees has met with stiff resistance. The proposal [was shelved](#) in favor of a voluntary donation option on the registration forms.

Arizona is not alone in making major cuts in its state parks. Gov. David Paterson of New York recently [recommended](#) the closing of 41 state parks and 14 historic sites in response to the state's fiscal problems. The closings remain subject to approval by the Legislature.

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1.

[doug l](#)

indiana

April 28th, 2010

9:28 am

I like the idea of private support for parks and I think our leadership should make reward of those that contribute in significant ways both financially and by volunteering. Reward can come in many forms; from a simple public acknowledgment, to opening the doors of the park's hidden treasures so that volunteers and contributors can become more intimate with the parks they have been so active in supporting. We have too long thought that parks operate without us.

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2.

Patrick C

Colorado Springs

April 28th, 2010

9:30 am

Why would anyone want to visit Arizona these days?

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3.

Curtis Henson

Phoenix, Arizona

April 28th, 2010

10:22 am

To Patrick C in Colorado:

I live in Arizona. I agree with you. I'm leaving as soon as I get out of my underwater home.

Take my advice and stay away from this state. Housing is not the only failure in Arizona. The state is a disaster from years of mismanagement by corrupt politicians and rape by corporate pirates.

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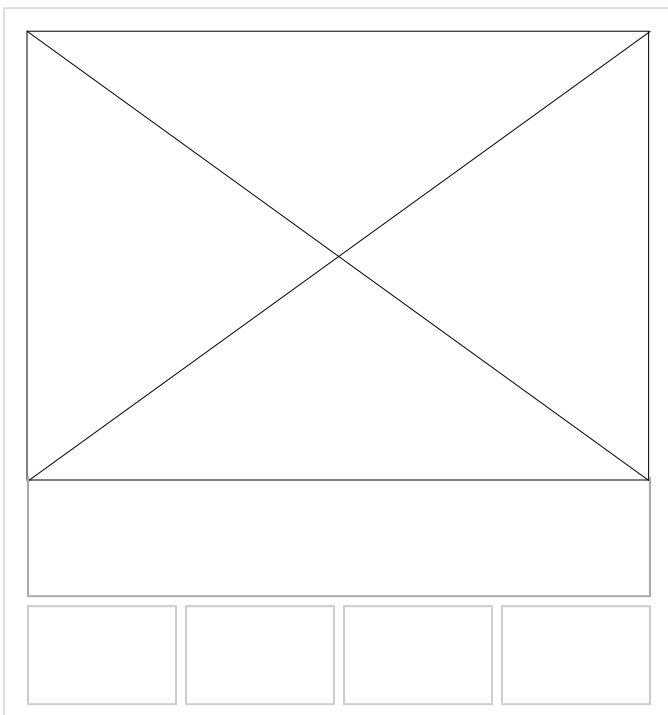
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