



Campers, surfers and environmentalists made quite a splash on the California State Capitol on January 22, 2008 for our Save the Park Sacramento trip. In the pouring rain volunteers dedicated to saving San Onofre State Beach decorated the Capitol lawn with 161 little red tents representing the campsites that would likely be abandoned due to the harm the Foothill-South Toll Road would have on San Mateo Campground.

The proposed Foothill-South toll road would have devastating effects on California's 5th most popular state park, San Onofre State Beach, causing abandonment of nearly 60% of the park. In addition to the likely closure of San Mateo Campground, the toll road could also have adverse effects on Southern California's last natural, pristine watershed, and will cut through the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy.

The purpose of the trip was to raise awareness of the upcoming Coastal Commission hearing regarding the toll road on February 6th. We thought it was likely that one of the Coastal Commission appointing authorities might try some sort of last minute interference in the process and decided to have a Sacramento based "visibility event" to push back on whatever might come out of Sacramento intending to influence the process. And, low and behold, just days before our event Governor Schwarzenegger released a letter asking the Coastal Commission (of which a third are his appointees) to approve the toll road through San Onofre State Beach.

Standing alongside the 161 tents, Sierra Club activists handed out fact sheets about Sierra Club's Friends of the Foothills campaign and the fight to save San Onofre State Beach, along with S'more granola bars. We held a press conference on the steps of the capitol featuring speakers from the California State Treasurer's office, California State Parks

Foundation, Sierra Club and Surfrider. An environmental sign-on to the California Coastal Commission was presented at the press conference. Afterwards, volunteers met with Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez's office, a representative from the Senate Natural Resources Committee and with the California State Parks Department.

Timeline-3 weeks out

First I secured a permit with California Highway Patrol for the date of January 22nd on the North Steps of the capitol. Once I had the date, I began recruiting volunteers to attend the trip through phone calls and e-mails. I then began the arduous task of buying the 161 tents, they could not be purchased on-line and no one store carried 161 of them. So I began the pilgrimage of Southern California Ikeas to get all the tents. During this time I began working with California State Parks Foundation on drafting an environmental sign-on letter.

Timeline-2 weeks out

During this week I finalized the list of volunteers attending the event and arranged for the plane tickets and hotel rooms. I updated the s'more fact sheet that we had used in the past and Elizabeth ordered the printing and the s'more granola bars. The environmental sign-on letter was finalized and California State Parks Foundation began circulating the letter around to our coalition, the Save San Onofre coalition, and statewide environmental groups. I continued to buy tents during this time, and I also ordered the banners.

Timeline-1 week out

By this time we really began to work on the press aspect of this event. I wrote the media alert and sent it to our coalition's P.R. firm to circulate to the media. California State Parks Foundation, Elizabeth and I began to secure speakers for the press conference, and we were thrilled when we secured California State Treasurer, Bill Lockyer. I wrote a press release and other members of the coalition put together press kits. I worked to secure meetings with the offices of Governor Schwarzenegger, Speaker Fabian Nunez, and Senate Pro-Tem Don Perata. I finished up buying the tents, and I picked up all the other tools necessary for the trip. At the end of the week I packed up everything in activist Ed Schlegel's car to drive to Sacramento.



Day of the event:

Set Up and leafleting:

On the day of the event we started set up at 5:00 a.m. in order to take advantage of the possibility of early morning media coverage. Though we were tired and it was raining, 15 volunteers and I were in good spirits as we set up the 161 little tents and banners. At 7:00 a.m. we began leafleting to people who were on their way to work in the capitol. Though people were trying to quickly get out of the rain, many couldn't help but stop and ask us what was going on. Our main goal with the leafleting tactic was to get those passing by to stop and talk with us about the tents and the fact that there is a proposal for a toll road through a state park. Though the volunteers tried their best, the rain proved to be a real obstacle in leafleting.

Morning media included an interview with me on KFBK-AM, which is the number one radio show in Sacramento, and an interview with me and volunteers on KMAX-TV, a Sacramento television station.

Press Conference:

At 10:00 our press conference began. Another obstacle thrown our way was the cancellation of California State Treasurer Bill Lockyer's appearance. We were, however, able to secure Deputy Treasurer Tricia Wynne, and she spoke on behalf of the Treasurer. Other speakers included, Elizabeth Goldstein, President of the California State Parks Foundation, Deborah Fry, San Mateo camper, Jim Metropulos, Legislative Representative for Sierra Club California, and Stefanie Sekich, Surfrider Foundation. Environmental leaders focused on the upcoming Coastal Commission hearing and the precedent-setting level of destruction this toll road would cause. Deborah Fry spoke from personal experience about her love of the campground and its importance to the working people of Southern California. The Treasurer's office spoke of their disappointment in Governor Schwarzenegger's recent endorsement of the toll road, and their renewed fight to stop this toll road on behalf of the people of California.

Volunteers holding surfboards and banners that said "San Mateo Campground At Risk For A Pay-To-Drive Road" and "Save San Onofre State Beach, Stop the Foothill-South Toll Road" stood behind the speakers during the conference and added to the visual aspect of this event.

We were able to secure numerous press hits all over the state based on the tents and the press conference.

Television hits: KABC News – Los Angeles – 5 PM, KCAL – Los Angeles – 3 PM, KCAL – Los Angeles – 9 PM, KCBS – Los Angeles – 5 PM, KMAX – Sacramento – 9 AM, KFMB – San Diego – 6:30 PM. **The Neilson audience for these hits reached nearly one million people.**

Print hits: Capitol Weekly, Sacramento paper; Laguna Beach Independent

Web hits: California Progress Report, an opinion piece by me; O.C. Weekly, an Orange

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