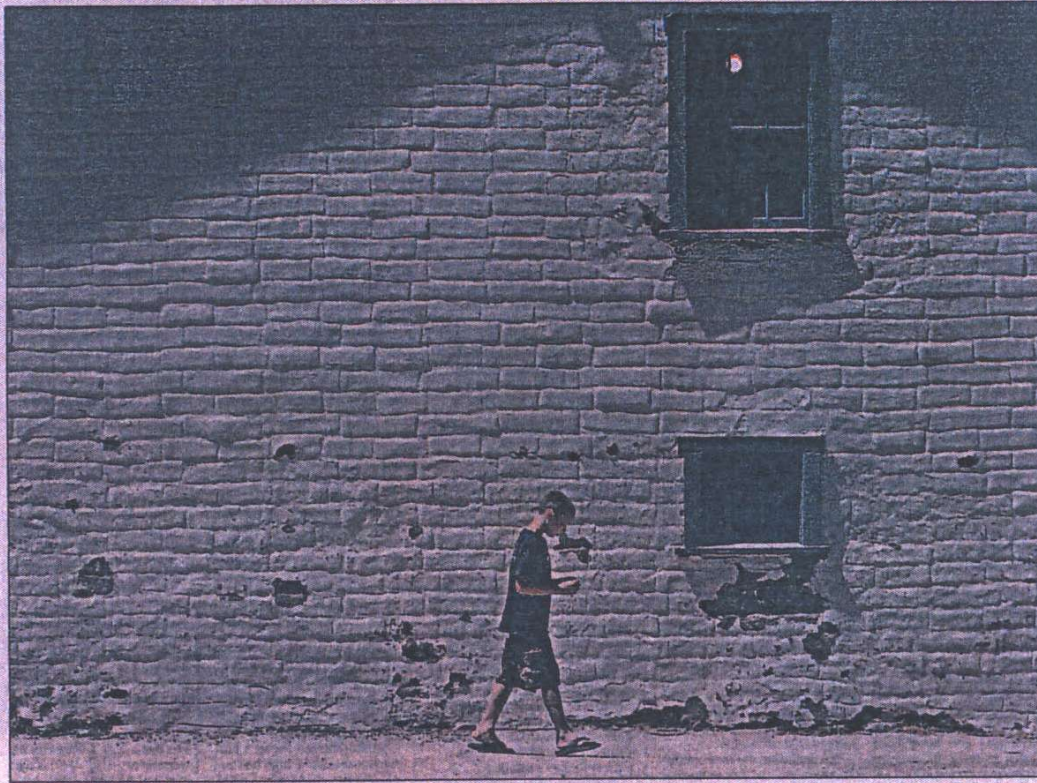


The Sacramento Bee

FRIDAY July 7, 2006

"It was literally melting away. This was an auditorium-sized building where hundreds of soldiers had stayed. It was extremely sad that this remnant of historic fabric was melting away in front of our eyes."

Ted Jackson, deputy director for state park operations, referring to Fort Tejon State Historic Park



Sacramento Bee/José Luis Villegas

Brady Solando, 9, of Carmichael walks next to an adobe wall at Sutter's Fort in Sacramento that age and the elements are eroding. State money for repairs could be coming.

State parks snag \$250 million for repairs

SUTTER'S FORT IN TROUBLE

- Historic Sutter's Fort is weakening because mortar holding together the brick walls enclosing the midtown fort is disappearing.
- The walls were reconstructed between 1891 and 1893 and are covered in lead-based paint, which has to be removed.
- Inside the fort, an original adobe building is slowly eroding, too.
- The repairs and restoration will probably cost just short of \$1 million.

Source: Capital District state museums and historic parks

By M.S. Enkoji
BEE STAFF WRITER

As a state park superintendent, Ted Jackson remembers how the adobe walls of a soldiers' barracks at historic Fort Tejon began eroding.

Without the money to stop it, all he could do was keep a painful vigil. "It was literally melting away," Jackson said. "This was an auditorium-sized building where hundreds of soldiers had stayed. It was extremely sad that this remnant of historic fabric was

Budget windfall will help rebuild network of recreational, historic sites in dire need of attention

melting away in front of our eyes."

Fort Tejon State Historic Park in Southern California and the 277 other state parks got a \$250 million shot in the arm last week from the new state budget. The one-time windfall — a significant part of the state Department of Parks and Recreation's \$605 million total budget — is earmarked to chip away at a \$906 million maintenance backlog that has been piling up for more than 20 years.

The cheering hasn't died down yet at
► PARKS, Page A4

"It will make a huge amount of difference in trail maintenance and repair and other things, like buildings being painted. It will mean creeks and streams and lakes are clean and usable."

Elizabeth Goldstein, president, California State Parks Foundation

Parks: Water, sewer repairs most urgent

► FROM PAGE A3
the state Department of Parks and Recreation.

"It's off the chart. There's nothing comparable," said Jackson of the big bonus. "It is a tremendous gift to Californians and future Californians on the part of the Legislature and the governor," said Jackson, who is now deputy director for park operations.

The department only got \$66 million for all maintenance in last year's budget.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last week signed the new \$131 billion spending plan, which benefited from a nearly \$8 billion revenue boost from an expanding economy.

Because of years of lean budgets, the parks department has been delaying millions of dollars in maintenance, everything from falling sewer lines at campgrounds to crumbling walls at Sutter's Fort in Sacramento.

At the same time, more people than ever are visiting state parks. The number of visitors climbed from 76 million to 87 million between 1990 and 2005.

Jackson is now drawing up a to-do list for a massive facelift of the country's largest state park system. Priorities should be established by the end of summer, he said.

The adobe barracks at the fort about 70 miles north of Los Angeles at Sutter's Fort will most likely be on the list, Jackson said.

"It's not sexy stuff. We're talking roads and roofs and water systems, but that will hold us for 30 or 40 or 50 years," he said.

The department, which has six years to use the \$250 million, will immediately launch several pressing projects, mostly water and sewage systems, some that started serving campers just after World War I, Jackson said. Water and sewer lines are among the most expensive projects because of the additional cost of replacing them in environmentally sensitive areas.

At Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park in Del Norte County, about a third of the 106 camping spaces have been closed because a sewage treatment facility is overtaxed.

In Sacramento, Sutter's Fort repairs should be high on the

district superintendent for the Capital District state museums and historic parks.

Mortar holding together the white brick walls enclosing the midtown fort is disappearing, weakening the historic structure.

"If you let things go, pretty soon you'd have things crumbling," Taylor said.

The fort walls were reconstructed between 1891 and 1893 and also are covered in lead-based paint, which has to be removed, she said.

An adobe building inside the fort, an original structure, also is slowly eroding, Taylor said. The repairs and restoration will probably cost just under \$1 million, she said.

She also has on her wish list repairs in Old Sacramento and at the Governor's Mansion.

The maintenance money is like a free shopping spree at Home Depot for park superintendents.

"We haven't seen this kind of money in years," she said. "It's incredible."

Legislative staffers say after the parks maintenance backlog was lopped from an infrastructure measure on the November ballot, legislators and the governor warmed to the idea of divvying up at least some of the money from the general fund.

A nonprofit foundation that raises money to supplement state park operations hailed the maintenance money as a bonus that park users will appreciate.

"It will make a huge amount of difference in trail maintenance and repair and other things, like buildings being painted," said Elizabeth Goldstein, president of the California State Parks Foundation. "It will mean creeks and streams and lakes are clean and usable."

The maintenance backlog will continue to grow, Goldstein said, but this year's money will make significant inroads.

"I think there is a growing awareness about deferred maintenance, and because there's a little bit of gravy in the budget, this has been the first opportunity for the governor and the Legislature to do something about it. We couldn't be more pleased."

■ ■ ■
The Bee's M.S. Enkoji can be reached at (916) 321-1106 or mkenko@bee.com