



March 9, 2009

**C. L. "Butch" Otter**  
governor

John F. Magnuson  
PO Box 2350  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83816

**Robert L. Meinen**  
director

**RE:** Letter on Old Mission

**Dean Sangrey, Administrator**  
operations division

Dear Mr. Magnuson:

**David M. Ricks, Administrator**  
management services division

Thank you for sending me a carbon copy of your letter to Mr. Latham Williams and my Board members. The last thing any of us in the parks and recreation profession want to do is talk about closing any state park. We respect you and the memory of your father, Harry F. Magnuson. Your opinion counts very much, however, what are we to do when our agency is faced with significant budget shortfalls?

IDAHO PARK AND  
RECREATION BOARD

Idaho State Parks and Recreation has 30 jewels, located throughout the state, representing the interests of every Idaho region and community. Yes, the Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park is very important to our agency, as are the 29 other public properties entrusted to our agency. How would you suggest we deal with ongoing, significant budget cuts that could leave all the parks in the state system financially weak and deteriorated?

.....  
**Steve Klatt**  
region one

This scenario has happened before in the late 1970's through the early 1980's. Our agency chose at that time to do attrition budgeting. After three years in a row of significant budget cuts, our parks could not function at a level that was safe for public use. The facilities deteriorated and the safe drinking water available within parks was at risk and failing to meet the state standards for public use. Parks were understaffed which resulted in poor maintenance. Finally, due to the layoff of staff and deteriorated facilities, three parks were closed and about 20% of remaining staff were laid off. It took years for the agency to bounce-back from those hard times.

**Randal F. Rice**  
region two

**Ernest J. Lombard**  
region three

**Latham Williams**  
region four

**Jean S. McDevitt**  
region five

**Douglas A. Hancey**  
region six

Our state is again faced with financial hardships, the extent of which is unknown. Having learned valuable lessons on the effects of attrition budgeting in the past, I feel it is in the best interest of parks and visitors to seek proactive solutions to our state's budget realities and position our agency to weather what could, and very likely will be, a lengthy budget deficit. Our agency can do this by strategically closing and limiting public access to very specific state park properties, while still protecting them for posterity and future re-opening. I propose this process, as opposed to implementing a system-wide budget reduction, which we know from historic practice, will ultimately lead to maintenance backlog, threats to safety and facility degradation.

.....  
IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
PARKS AND RECREATION

You may ask, "Why start with the Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park?" I have proposed criteria to the Park and Recreation Board that rates parks for key elements. Those measures include ownership of land, number of visitors per year, income earned and threats to resource protection.

.....  
p.o. box 83720  
boise, idaho 83720-0065

(208) 334-4199

fax (208) 334-3741

tdd 1-800-377-3529

street address  
5657 Warm Springs Avenue

www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov

In the case of Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park, when those criteria are applied, it ranks near the top of the list. For example, the Mission and the property it rests on, is not owned by the State of Idaho. The owners could operate the facility if they wanted to. Visitation to Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park is good but not at the level of most Idaho State Parks. The income versus the cost of operation is the lowest of all the other facilities. The threat to the resources is at a medium level, as IDPR will have staff nearby maintaining the Trail of the Coeur d'Alene's and will monitor the facility, making sure the area is secure.

It is clear to our agency that the economy is not going to turn around for several years. Agency-wide budget decreases and blanketing the state park system with cuts will weaken all parks and programs, limiting our ability to manage, maintain and protect the resources entrusted to us.

As we've witnessed in the past, years of attrition-type budgeting and continued reductions means a slow and painful death for state parks. It is my opinion that we should do all that we can to protect the integrity of our parks and the experiences had within, not slowly bleed the system of available funds to provide and manage to public services, safety and facility needs until every park in the system must be closed.

Please let me know if you have any viable alternative. We need your help and advice on feasible solutions.

Again I appreciate your concerns for the Old Mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert L. Meinen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a small "L".

Robert L. Meinen

Cc: Board Members