**Current Events**

**Summary**

This article was taken from the Des Moines Register website. It states that people are concerned that recent budget cuts by the State Legislature could force the Department of Natural Resources to be required to force state park closures. Although no indication of this possibility has been mentioned, many are fearful that it could become a reality. The annual budget of the Iowa DNR has been cut by $1.2 million since last year and a job freeze is in effect. Also, the number of single full-time employees at 22 state parks makes it worrisome that the future of Iowa State Parks is bleak. The Iowa DNR wants to keep up the high standards that it has established over the years, but with limited financial support from lawmakers in Des Moines they are quite concerned.

**Importance**

I think this article is sad in many ways. I grew up in Spragueville, Iowa and going to Maquoketa Caves State Park or Bellevue State Park was something my family did on a regular basis (at least once a year). I also worked one summer (2013) at Bellevue State Park, which allowed me to witness a beautiful view of the Mississippi River every day I worked. Those state parks are an outlet for people to enjoy nature, the outdoors, and recreational activities (such as camping, fishing, spelunking, hiking, biking, sight-seeing, picnicking, etc.). For the State Legislature to “defund” the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is appalling. Sure, it is an easy way for the state to cut expenses and save money, but not at the expense of a recreational outlet (which people thrive on for escapism from their daily routines). In this day and age with technology dominating the lives of everyone to some extent, being in touch with nature is more important than ever. There is a world full of vibrant life if a person takes the time to unplug or look up. Without places like Iowa State Parks, the opportunities to experience the beauty of life diminishes. Likewise, the wonderful memories of being outdoors as a child or adult are in danger of being threatened.

**Budget Cuts Raise Worries That Some Iowa State Parks Will Have 'Closed' Signs**

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As Iowans are making plans for summer vacations, budget cuts are raising worries that some of Iowa's state parks could be forced to close.

Steep reductions in the ranks of seasonal workers at Iowa's state parks are already making it more difficult to keep grass mowed, restrooms cleaned and trash picked up.

But there are no immediate plans to shut down any state parks and no list is being developed of state parks where the gates may be locked, said Chuck Gipp, director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. He said he still wants to do everything possible to ensure an enjoyable experience for park guests.

"I don't want to give anybody the impression that there will be state parks closed by the Department of Natural Resources this summer," Gipp told The Des Moines Register on Tuesday. "That is all a matter of various circumstances of which we are not aware of at this time."

However, some facts are clear: The Iowa DNR has seen its annual budget sliced by $1.2 million since a year ago and the agency has imposed a freeze on jobs covered by state general fund expenditures. There are currently 22 state parks with only one full-time employee, which raises questions about the future of those parks if the employee retires and another state worker can't be transferred into the post from another state park which has a second employee.

During the Iowa Legislature's recently concluded session, minority Democratic legislators were skeptical that all state parks could remain open after budget cuts were approved. But Republican lawmakers repeatedly gave assurances no state parks would be closed.

Sen. Rita Hart, D-Wheatland, said Tuesday she had felt frustration during the legislative session at the possibility that Republicans' budget numbers weren't adding up to support their optimistic view.