

America's national parks plagued by pollution, budget cuts

By Scott Sterling



Mark Ralston/AFP/Getty Images

A family looks at the base of a Giant Sequoia tree that lies toppled in the Sequoia National Park.

[CBS News is reporting](#) that California's own Sequoia National Park holds the dubious distinction as the most air polluted national park in the country. The park, which is located in the Sierra Nevada forest and home to the famous giant redwoods, had the highest smog levels and most recorded violations over last year.

The heightened ozone levels at Sequoia are not just dangerous to humans, but the forest as well. [According to the Associated Press](#), redwood seedlings and both Jeffrey and ponderosa pines are significantly stressed by the pollution.

Four California state parks were among the nation's top seven most air polluted, including Joshua Tree, Yosemite and Mojave National Preserve. This information comes

from the U.S. Park Service and the EPA at a time when national parks are suffering through significant budget cuts that park-goers are likely to feel this year.

[As reported by the San Francisco Chronicle](#), with more cuts looming and no increase in the National State Park's annual budget of \$2.75 million in President Obama's proposed spending plan for next year (which is a best case scenario), amenities such as number of campgrounds, information booth hours and safety patrols will have no choice but to be reduced.

"National parks already faced cuts during the last two years and are already underfunded so any additional cut makes the challenges even greater," said John Garder, the National Park Conservation Association's budget and appropriations legislative rep to the Chronicle. "The impact on people's vacations will be substantial."

Not everyone agrees that that the cuts are a bad thing, and that there are more important national priorities, like Dan Mitchell, senior fellow at Washington, D.C. think tank the Cato Institute.

"Even with ... cuts they will still have more money than they had 10 years ago and 20 years ago," Mitchell told the Chronicle, "and yet, we had the parks open back then."