

September 22, 2014, 2:25 p.m. [Sent via email to each of the five [County Supervisors—Fernando Armenta, Louis Calcagno, Simon Salinas, Jane Parker, and Dave Potter](#); to Interim [Parks](#) Director Nick Chiulos; and to Jan Perkins, Project Director, [Management Partners](#).]

Dear County Supervisors, Mr. Chiulos, and Ms. Perkins:

I noted with interest the story in the *Californian* on 9/19/14, "[Monterey County Parks Department has launched an online survey](#)," which indicated the survey is available for completion through Sept 30.

Please note the following weaknesses in this survey:

1. A question repeatedly asked is what do you consider to be the greatest risk to a particular park. Unfortunately, although the choices that can be selected include such options as climate change, **there is no option to select** if you are concerned about "Commercial interests adversely impacting the park" and "Inappropriate use disturbing the natural environment" (e.g., the zipline that had been proposed earlier for Jacks Peak), or "Private concession running the park." **I consider the failure to have options of this sort a very significant oversight.**
2. Although the survey is intended to solicit community input, **there are many comment fields limited to 50 characters**. That is not conducive to substantial community engagement. Later in the survey, a longer comment field is provided. However, unlike with a paper survey, people cannot see that longer comment option is coming. As a result, most survey respondents will just get frustrated when trying to make even a brief comment about any individual park. They will not keep track of ideas they thought of along the way, because they will not know that they can provide longer comment later.

It makes sense that longer comments take more time to review, and this may not be a cost Management Partners is willing to absorb. Nonetheless, if most comment fields are limited to 50 characters, **it cannot be counted on that County Parks and the Board of Supervisors are truly getting a good look at how people feel about these parks.**

Of course, there is another issue too: the opinions of many people in our county are not being considered, unless a paper survey option is available. [Pew Research](#) reports that one-third of those making less than \$20,000 a year do not go online. Another third go online, but do not have Internet access at home. From the outreach I do as part of my volunteer work, I know that this is a challenge in Monterey County. This means that in cases where something such as a costly zipline ride is being considered for our parks, you will not hear from **the many low-income residents who cannot afford that sort of parks experience.**

Would people contact County Parks if they needed a paper survey? If you try phoning the publicly posted number for County Parks, 755-4895, you will likely find, as I did, that reaching a live person to make such a request isn't feasible. <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/parks/contact.html>

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
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