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California State Fair Moves the BIG FUN to July *Cal Expo Board Votes to Change State Fair Dates to July, Starting in 2010*

SACRAMENTO, CA (October 9, 2009) -- The California Exposition & State Fair board of directors today voted to change the California State Fair dates to July, starting in 2010.

After a lengthy discussion and considerable research by staff and others, the Cal Expo board cited numerous reasons for moving the State Fair to earlier in the summer. Of primary importance is the decreased conflict with the back-to-school schedule.

An audit of the 2009-2010 Greater Sacramento Area K-12 school population revealed that there are approximately 400,000 school-age children in the State Fair's target geographic area. Within that area, the vast majority of schools plan to start their 2010 academic year in August, rather than after Labor Day.

Since 2003, California schools have gradually shifted their calendars to allow for an earlier start date in the Summer and an earlier end date in the Spring. The State Fair's traditional schedule of ending on Labor Day is in direct conflict with that shift.

"This institution has a long history of being a destination for families," said California State Fair CEO and General Manager Norbert J. Bartosik. "Over the last six to seven years we have seen a continual decrease in our weekday attendance and the amount of repeat family visitors because of the school schedule. Fair fans that used to come two and three times during a single Fair season are now able to come only once."

Fair organizers believe that a move to July would give families more scheduling flexibility and greater opportunities to enjoy the event in a timeframe that is not so impacted by back-to-school activities and expenses.

"This is a major shift for us, but we feel this move is necessary for the State Fair to maintain its legacy of representing and showcasing California culture to Californians. We need to be able to grow and adapt to society's changes," Bartosik said.

The State Fair management has explored the challenges and opportunities that come with a move this significant. Analysis indicates that over the long term, the future benefits of the move could outweigh the drawbacks and challenges of the initial shift.

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Recently conducted research suggests that the date change to July will remove one of the major barriers to attendance. In the coming months, State Fair organizers plan to explore ways of combating the other factors that impact the attendance from year to year.

“We’ll be exploring everything from new entertainment, to more season passes and discounts.”

It is expected that the Fair industry will adjust to this date change with minimal impact. The only significant additional repercussions to existing participants could be a change in a nominal number of the food and commercial vendors. But Fair organizers see potential turnover as an opportunity to showcase new and different products and services to an ever-changing population of fairgoers.

“It’s important to understand that this date change is just one part of a multi-faceted, long-term strategy to revitalize the State Fair and the Cal Expo grounds. “

Redevelopment of the Cal Expo fairgrounds has already been identified as an important part of that long-term strategy. Discussions with the NBA, developers and other third-parties still continue.

“We see more potential for growth in the future with this new schedule, although it may take more than one year to see the full results.”

In addition, the Cal Expo events team sees considerable opportunity for a new special event, show or concert to be held at Cal Expo on Labor Day weekend.

According to Bartosik. “We plan to host something big at Cal Expo on Labor Day. We’ve already begun discussing the possibilities with promoters and other event planners.”

The 2010 California State Fair is now tentatively scheduled to run for 19 days from Wednesday, July 14 to Sunday, August 1.

For more information, please visit www.bigfun.org.