



Trails Workshop

by Ken Miller

On October 19, PRAC and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District hosted a trails workshop. Based on the response to the workshop and the comments I received afterwards it was an unqualified success. I initially planned for fifteen people and by the day of the workshop there were thirty two people working on the trail. It was great to see people from the Army Corps of Engineers, Humboldt, San Luis Obispo and Santa Clara Counties, the City of San Jose, West Valley College, Santa Cruz Water Department, Santa Cruz Open Space, East Bay Regional Parks, and the San Jose Conservation Corp. I think that mentions all of the agencies. I apologize if I left any out.

Pat Congdon Jason Langell, and Scott Cotterall took people on a hike that discussed pretty much all aspects of trail maintenance, aesthetics, and liability. John Kowaleski, Craig Beckman and their crew built a retaining wall. Bern Smith taught drain dip construction and repair. Coleman Wright brought the lunch sandwiches up for everyone and I didn't hear any complaints about the food. Yum!! Thanks to everyone for their help. I know that I had a blast. The completion certificates and evaluation forms are in the mail. Honest....!

Interpretation is Not Optional

by Pam Helmke

“Not having an Interpreter in a park is like inviting a guest to your house, opening their door, and then disappearing.”

William H. Carr

In this time of shrinking budgets many park ranger programs turn to emergency services and law enforcement as a way to justify positions and budgets. No one can argue that public safety is not an important part of a rangers job but we seem to forget that it should not be the whole job. Quality, timely and pertinent interpretation is one of the most valuable tools a park management professional can have.

Organizing an active interpretive system benefits all aspects of park management. It can reduce vandalism, decrease resource violations and gain support for resource management actions like prescribed burning. Regular interaction with park staff through interpretation greatly enhances the publics image of the agency. Many visitors become vocal park advocates supporting your agency at those all important budget hearings.

If your agency has an interpretive system in place don't let it wither away. Look for new ways to expand and grow. If you don't have interpretive programs start one. Campfire programs, guided hikes, or a basic course in

bird watching are good ways to start. A hot topic in many areas is responsible mountain bike use. Set up a beginners ride along a scenic or historic trail and let the novice rider learn valuable information on safe, environmentally sane bicycling.

In urban areas Junior Ranger programs are becoming popular. In a large city these programs can target at risk youth, kids 7 to 11 years old that probably haven't been pulled into gangs and drugs yet. Rangers provide a positive role model and can share the wonders of our natural landscapes and cultural treasures with kids who might only know concrete and graffiti.

Learning how to present relevant interpretive programs takes a little time and practice. Courses are offered through PRAC and colleges that offer degrees in park management and recreation. Many rangers aren't aware that training is also available through the National Park Service and California State Parks. Rangers from outside agencies can enroll in course taught at Albright Training Center at Grand Canyon and the Mott Training Center at Asilomar. Providing a strong interpretive system can reap enormous benefits for any agency will to put forth a little time and money.

“The interpretive dollar is the best dollar we spend”

Irving C. Root

Important Notice, Dues Are Now Due!!!

From the President's Desk

It's that time of year again. Elections and new regional directors are coming onto the board. This years elections have been spirited with both regions fielding three qualified and dedicated candidates for you to choose from. As I write this the final count of the ballots is still pending but I would like to thank every one who has participated.

Prior to the election some changes had already occurred to your board of directors. As many of you may already know **Chris Bramham**, a long time PRAC and Region 1 Director was recently promoted to Chief Ranger. The demands of the new position made it difficult for Chris to devote the time he wanted to spend working with PRAC and he submitted his resignation as director to the Board. **Sandy Ferreira**, a ranger with the City of Fremont, has graciously stepped forward to fill the remainder of the term. Sandy already has a lot of great ideas and things should be happening soon up in Region 1.

Down in Region 4, **Kelly Byrne** has chosen not to seek re-election. Kelly has working hard over the last two years to make her region more active and increase membership. Although her job is placing more demands on her time, Kelly will still be active in Southern California, and as is typical of Kelly, offered to help the new director with any projects or questions. Those of you who have met Kelly know her drive and enthusiasm is infectious. I have enjoyed working with her and I am glad she will continue to remain active.

The best time to meet your new Board of Directors will be at the March general membership meeting during the annual conference in Ventura. If you have the opportunity to go to the conference I hope you will take time to attend this important meeting. **Remember—participation is more than half the fun.** I wish you all a wonderful Holiday Season and hope to see you in Ventura!

Pam Helmke

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REGULAR: includes permanent, part-time, seasonal, retired, or managerial positions with uniformed park experience. (VOTING)

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STUDENT: includes full-time students interested in or studying for positions in parks as uniformed personnel. (NON-VOTING)

ASSOCIATE: includes anyone interested in the ranger profession, but who has not had uniformed experience. (NON-VOTING)

SUPPORTING: includes any individual or group that wishes to financially contribute to the advancement of the ranger profession. (NON-VOTING unless individual is eligible for REGULAR membership)

Californians Need Their Parks!

If you work for a park in any capacity, please consider the following:

- Parks and open spaces bring beauty to an area while giving people satisfaction and improving their quality of life. (Personal)
- Recreation together builds strong families, the foundation of a strong society. (Social)
- Pay now or pay more later! Investment in recreation as a preventative health service makes sense. (Economic)
- Through the provision of parks, open spaces and protected natural environments, recreation can contribute to the environmental health of our communities. This is an essential life-sustaining role. (Environmental)

As the above statements clearly indicate, parks and recreation services provide significant benefits that are personal, social, economic and environmental. Is there any doubt that the work we do as park and recreation employees is critical to our society's quality of life? Of course not!

Then why is it that we increasingly find our anxiety meters over-revving as the storm clouds of budget cuts, programs reductions and layoffs loom ever-darker on the horizon ("Horizon, heck! It's pouring right now!" you say)? Why are park and recreation agencies the targets of the ax-wielding budgeters if the services we offer are so damned important? And what does the future hold for parks—and our society—if people have forgotten how important parks are?

The threats facing parks, and especially public parks, at all levels—from national to state to local—are extremely serious. The issues involved go far beyond whether we will have jobs next year, as serious as that issue is. It is not hyperbole to say that the threats facing public parks and the recreation opportunities they offer go to the heart of the democratic ideals upon which this country was built and the quality of life our children will inherit. What tragedy if these treasures that were meant to belong to all the people for all time were to be lost for lack of understanding of their importance.

That's why the **upcoming California Parks Conference**, to be held in Ventura, March 11–15, 1996, is shaping up to be one of the most important in recent memory. The Conference's theme, "**Looking Ahead, Moving Forward, Serving with Pride,**" aims to recognize the accomplishments and contributions we in "Parks" have consistently made to the communities in which we work and live. But even more significantly, next year's Conference will focus on the essential role that "parks and Recreation" play in keeping society healthy and worth living in.

From the keynote address by Dr. Gary Machlis, Chief Sociologist with the National Park Service, to the workshops in Interpretation, Resource Management, Public Safety

and Operations, every part of the Conference is being organized to help you sharpen your understanding of the benefits that parks contribute to a healthy California. A primary goal of the Conference is to send you back to your parks as **park advocates** equipped with a renewed sense of the vital nature of parks (no pun intended) and with the tools and ammunition to enable you to storm the beachheads of an apathy, misinformation and misplaced priorities that are at the root of the current crisis.

Lest you think this sounds totally intense and serious, there will be the usual opportunities to get wild and crazy (golf tournament, the pistol shoot, the runs, etc.). Plus, you'll have the opportunity to go whale watching, paddle an ocean kayak, and enjoy a banquet high atop the beautiful Holiday Inn in its revolving restaurant!

If you have ideas for workshop topics that fit the theme, vendors you think would be good, or other ideas, please contact the appropriate Workshop Track Coordinator:

Resource Management: Virginia Gardiner-Johnson,
(805) 899-1412, FAX (805) 899-1415
Operations: Frank Padilla,
(805) 986-8484, FAX (805) 488-5367
Public Safety: Scott Nakaji,
(805) 248-7015, FAX (805) 248-0228
Interpretation: Wes Chapin,
(805) 899-1406, FAX (805) 899-1415

**Reserve the dates, March 11–15, 1996.
You need this Conference! Parks need advocates!
And we need you!**



Dealing With Gang Members In Your Park

by Ken Weiner

One of the significant differences between an urban park ranger and rangers in more rural or remote areas is dealing with regular park visitors that pose concerns. Many parks in California cities are designated or claimed "gang turf." Rangers working in these areas often encounter the same gang members two to five times or more in the same day.

In Roseville we have found that keeping track of our local gang members in terms of their identification and probation status has been helpful to us. We use our Police Department Gang Interrogation Validation Report criteria in terms of classifying an individual as a gang member.

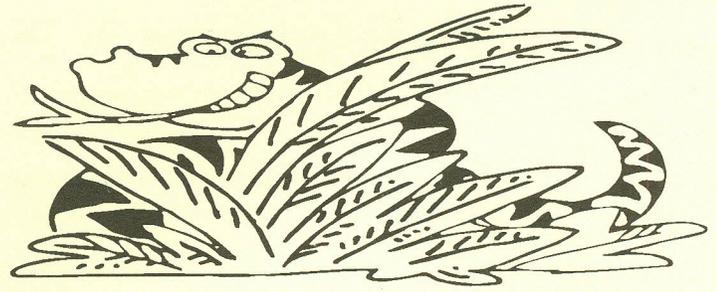
We have maintained a close relationship with our detective assigned to gangs, and the Placer County Probation Department. We have assisted both juvenile and adult probation officers on probation arrests and searches. This relationship translates into an efficient information exchange. We currently receive a monthly printout from Placer County Juvenile Probation that consists of gang members, probation terms and their "status" within the Juvenile Justice System.

Knowing your local probation officers enables you to provide information useful to probation in setting probation terms. We routinely add names to non-association terms for our local juvenile gang members, and probation often bans them from park areas close to their residences or areas of gang activity.

We have forwarded many probation violation reports to Juvenile Probation. In several cases we have been able to arrest gang members as a result of our documenting the violations and telephone conversations with probation officers.

Our local gang members are very aware of the rangers close association with their probation officers. This has resulted in a very low level of gang activity in Weber Park which was once a focal point of gang activity. In 1987 every square inch of the recreation/restroom building was covered with gang graffiti. Today the park is graffiti free thanks to ranger, patrol, and neighborhood policing efforts. Thanks to a community revitalization effort, park improvements have occurred and the community has increased pride and a sense of ownership in their park.

Get to know your local gang members, probation officers, and law enforcement units. The community along with a truly cooperating law enforcement effort can have a dramatic effect on your gang problems.



Palo Alto Park Rangers To Lose Their Peace Officer Status?

by Gordon Baillie

The peace officer status of the City of Palo Alto's Park Rangers is being questioned. The issue arose after a request for a home address confidentiality form for a Ranger's private vehicle and after questions were asked about the procedures for reporting child abuse.

The issue has also raised concerns in the Police Department (they are concerned about the workload in training rangers) and in Human Resources. Also the issue of the rangers' image and role, especially relating to enforcement, seem to be raising concerns.

That the rangers peace officer status should be questioned at all is a surprise to the rangers. Each of the permanent Rangers had to go through an extensive background check and had to attend PC 832. Extensive documentation exists which states that the rangers are Peace Officers. Included in this documentation is a former City Attorney's opinion. The former Superintendent of the City's Open Space program also believes that the rangers are peace officers.

Palo Alto Rangers patrol urban parks, as well as over 4,000 acres of nature preserves, with very extended response times for back up.

The rangers feel that this is a removal of an existing protection, while the City's management are referring to it as a "clarification."

The rangers have been actively researching this issue and any help would be appreciated. Most agencies in the greater San Francisco Bay area have gone to peace officer status for their staff. If you have any information or ideas on this issue, please feel free to contact me:

Gordon Baillie
Senior Ranger - City of Palo Alto
(415) 617-3156
(415) 917-9647 (Fax)
E-mail = SmokeyHam @ AOL.COM

Preserve and Protect the Wildlife and Natural Beauty in Your Park

Sandy Ferreira

Every day people come to Lake Elizabeth to enjoy the natural beauty of the park and especially to view the wildlife. We at Lake Elizabeth are fortunate. If you have not been to this park, you should take the time to visit and you will be pleasantly surprised to see that Lake Elizabeth support a wide variety of flora and fauna. Of particular interest is the large number of birds and waterfowl in the park, especially at this time of the year. The numbers of waterfowl seem to be on the rise, you can see large numbers of migratory Canada geese as well as "resident" Canada geese grazing on the sport fields and resting on the lake. For the past few years, the population has risen to an all time high, and with the increase in population, we receive a number of complaints from park users about the "goose droppings" which litter the pathways, sports fields, picnic and play areas, not to mention the continuous damage to turf. If Canada geese were to design paradise, there would be lots of tender grass for grazing, a pond or lake for drinking, protection from the public and no predators. At Lake Elizabeth all these factors exist. We have provided the perfect safe habitat for these geese and other birds that pass through on their seasonal migration. What are park managers to do? What checks and balances can we use to control the resident populations yet encourage those that migrate to continue to pass through?

In 1991, an epidemic of Avian Cholera at Lake Elizabeth resulted in the death of many of the resident domestic goose population including some Canada geese and ducks. This was attributed to a number of factors. Feeding the wildlife has been a recreational activity at lake Elizabeth for many years. Some people ask, "how does feeding the birds harm them?" Birds and wildlife will feed on the most easily available food source and will neglect a balanced diet of natural foods. As long as an artificial food source is available, they tend to remain in the park and not migrate. This overcrowding creates stress among the birds which in turn lowers the bird's resistance to fight off a disease like Avian Cholera. As a preventative action plan, the park no longer sells duck food. Signs have been posted throughout the park and brochures are handed out in an effort to educate the public. Rangers contact park visitors whenever they are seen feeding the wildlife and began to educate them. This has been an ongoing daily challenge and breaking old habits is not easy. As caretakers of the parks, we all share a responsibility to preserve and protect our natural resources.



Sharing Ideas Through P.R.A.C.

(What A Concept...)

My colleague on the Board, Dave Sloan had a great idea in the last issue of the *Signpost*. Sharing ideas that we as professionals have tried in the field, have heard about or were total failures passed down from management.

My agency (City of Los Angeles) does have a good idea when it comes to scheduling. We have been working on a 4/10 schedule for approximately three years. The shifts are 0700-1730; 1400-0030; and 2200-0830 hours. There is a half hour off the clock for code-7. You work either Wednesday through Saturday or Sunday through Wednesday.

The advantages of this schedule are not only do you get 3 days off (one of which is a weekend day), but if you need to schedule a transient sweep with maximum deployment, you know everyone will be in on Wednesdays. Because we

are so understaffed down here in the city, schedule adjustments are quite frequent depending on what needs to be covered. If your agency is thinking about changing schedules, be advised the 4/10 works nicely. And if anyone is having good luck with a 3/12, please write in to the *Signpost*, as I'd love to hear about it.

This is the last article I am mandated to write as a Regional Director. But I hope P.R.A.C. members realize that the *Signpost* is the newsletter for networking statewide in the Park Ranger profession. This is how we communicate with each other and that is more important than any of us could ever imagine.

Signing off as Region 4 Director,
Kelly Byrne

Water Safety and Daycare Centers

by Park Ranger Keith Willis
USACE Lake Kaweah, CA

This past spring another Corps ranger and I did three water-safety presentations at a daycare center near Lake Kaweah, California where we work. Seeing how eager some youngsters were to watch the water-safety video "Longfellow's Whale Tales" a second time spawned an idea. Why not loan a water-safety video to all local daycare centers for the kids to view? Management at Lake Kaweah agreed: Let's teach the youngsters about water safety! The younger, the better.

This we are now doing. I first contacted the County Office of Education and obtained a list of all registered daycare centers in our area, large and small. Kaweah management purchased blank video tapes for permanent loan to these daycare centers, I called each daycare center and sent a water-safety video in the the mail that I copied at our office. Each video copy has two movies: "Wet'N Safe" by the California Department of Boating and Waterways (13 minutes) and "Water Safety: A family affair" by the USA Corps of Engineers (16 minutes). Permission to reproduce has been granted by both organizations. I also include with each video a short letter recommending "Longfellow's Whale Tales" (13 minutes), a water-safety video targeting K-9 grades which is copyrighted and sold by the American Red Cross.

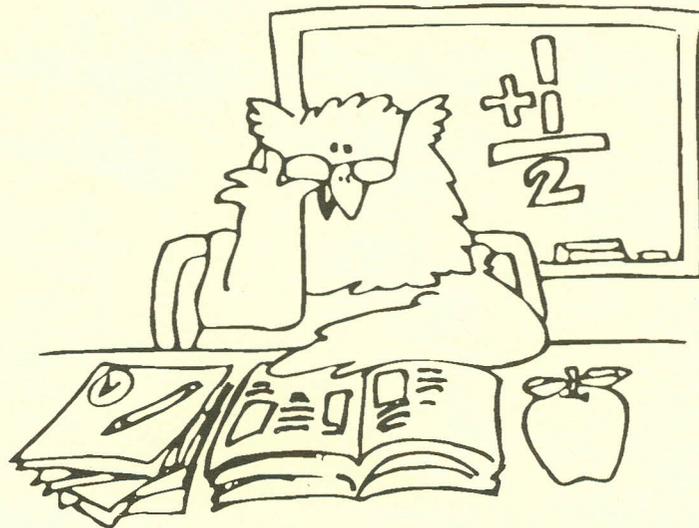
Cost to the Corps of Engineers per daycare center for this water-safety message is about three dollars, including mailing. It is a wonderful investment and great public relations. Let the kids watch these water-safety movies as often as they want. Maybe we can save some lives this way.

PORAC Wrap-up

by Ken Miller

Over the past year the PRAC board of Directors has been looking into providing membership in PORAC and legal defense fund coverage for PRAC members. The process looked complicated at first and unfortunately it is complicated. In the last newsletter we sent out a survey regarding PORAC and we only got a few responses back.

At this time there is not enough interest in PORAC for PRAC to set anything up. Maybe in the future something can be set up. In the meantime each agencies bargaining unit can set up membership in PORAC for its members. My union is currently looking into PORAC and there are quite a few agency bargaining units that are already members of PORAC. Good luck with your bargaining and keep up the communication with other PRAC members.



BAR-B-QUE

Wrap-up

by Ken Miller

On September 28th the Region 2 bar-b-que happened at Vasona County Park in Los Gatos. About 15 people swapped good food, stories, and played the ever unusual volleyball. You've got to see PRAC volleyball to believe it.

The San Jose Rangers were well represented, I represented the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, and other people were from West Valley College, City of Palo Alto, and the County of Santa Clara. Tom Smith and John Nicholas of West Valley College were there. Maybe we'll see you there next year.

News From Region I

Hello fellow PRAC Members. As your newly appointed Director for Region 1, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Sandy Ferreira, and I am a Park Ranger for the City of Fremont. I have worked with the City of Fremont for 7 years. Prior to Fremont I worked for East Bay Regional Park District for 3 years. I have been an active member of PRAC for 6 years, so I may have met some of you already at the PRAC conferences, workshops or social events. If I have not, please give me a call and say hello.

As your new Director, one of the goals I have set for myself is to work toward increasing our PRAC membership. This is vital if our organization is to grow. Secondly, I would like to hear from all members especially in Region 1. I am looking for new ideas and would like your input so that I can put together a training day or workshop that you would like to attend in our region.

Give me a call, mail or fax me your ideas. I would like to hear from you.... Thanks, *Sandy Ferreira*

Smitty's Book Report

There are names that are, or were, important in our profession, that jump out at you from time to time. One of those, in my opinion, is Frederick Law Olmsted. Some of you might recall that Olmsted is considered by many as the father of parks in America. The designer of Central Park in New York, as well as other parks in the United States, Olmsted was the person who first called himself a "landscape architect." The reason I mention his name, is that I bought a most beautiful book this past week about Olmsted. It was far too expensive for most people (even me), but I bought it anyway. The text was about Olmsted's life and his accomplishments. The pictures are "coffee table" quality taken at sites that he designed. Beverege, Charles E., and Larkin, David, **Frederick Law Olmsted, Designing the American Landscape**, Rizzoli International Publications, New York, New York. Price.....gulp...\$75! I don't think many rangers will be paying this kind of price. Maybe waiting until it appears on the sale table might be in order. Matter of fact, that is probably what I should have done.

Another name caught my eye the other day as I was "grazing" the book aisles at Barnes and Noble. Alston Chase. Who is Alston Chase? Chase wrote a controversial book in 1986 entitled, **Playing God in Yellowstone**. (Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston/New York) It was a book that attacked how the National Park Service managed the resources in Yellowstone over the years. Although it seemed to be well researched, there were some things that he said that I didn't agree with. Like bad-mouthing the Park Service for not doing something, when the science to do otherwise was not yet in place.

Chase has written another. It is a book, equally researched, that looks into, what he calls, "The fight over forests, and the rising tyranny of ecology." It contains over one hundred pages of references! It is a book about the battle over the old growth forests of the Northwest, the biggest environmental conflict (to this point) in history. Chase has a degree in philosophy, and after you have waded through a chapter or two of philosophical "reasoning," he then gets down to the "nitty gritty." Chase asks us to examine our basic assumptions about how we manage our resources, and about the rights of animals and the rights of humans. What is ecology, anyway? Is it a science or a philosophy? What is an ecosystem? Does science really know what these things are? He interviews loggers, environmental activists, scientists and "big wigs" from Wall Street. All of whom, were involved in this conflict. He introduces us to the term, "biocentrism," which holds that human beings are no more important than other living things. It is a doctrine that many mainstream environmental groups, and even some government agencies aspire to. Chase suggests that agencies really have jumped on the biocentrism bandwagon without logical thought of the consequences, and have also turned to an "ecosystem management" theory without scientific fact.

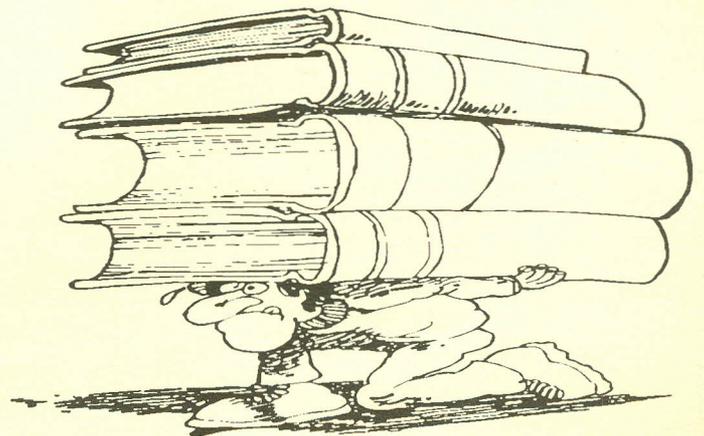
He takes us all through the development of the environmental organization, "Earth First!", the people involved,

and environmental-extremism (including forms of eco-terrorism). Chase hopes for a middle ground, that somehow there will be a special agreement between economics and the environment, and he points out some lights at the end of the tunnel. Like in **Playing God in Yellowstone**, when he picked on the Park Service for management practices, Chase points to the historic exclusion of fire from the ecosystem as being a part of the problem of sustainable forest management, as if the land managers were at fault! On the contrary, governmental agencies have all pressed for using fire as a management tool for years, and politics made the decisions and not science. Chase suggests that we retreat from practices that are not already supported by science. Surprising for a philosopher. I have always thought it was smart to hold the line until science can support practices one way or another. It could be too late to turn back. Chase also believes that the current trend in restoration is a waste of time, as no-one knows how far to retreat. In **a Dark Wood** an interesting book, and an eye opener, and a thought provoker. At least it was to me. A good book to ask Santa for. Maybe not the "typical book" that I have reviewed, but one that might help foster an understanding of the politics of environmental conflict that we all could be a part of, big-time!

Chase, Alston, **In a Dark Wood**, Houghton/Mifflin, New York, New York, 1995. Cost is around thirty dollars.

A good park ranger friend (not a former student, by the way) approached me and questioned my "giving up" on one of his favorite books; **An Island Called California**. My first thought was that I really did not picture this individual as one who would own this book. Geez, did I have that wrong! My second thought was one of pleasure that someone had, indeed, read my little blurb in the *Signpost*! On the first thought, I should have known better. On the second, I guess we will continue to purchase and read books of interest to you. By the way, if you would like to review a book for me, let me know. I do have a couple on the shelf that I would be willing to have you review. I am more than happy to share! After all, basketball season is finally here!

Remember, you owe it to your agency, your fellow rangers, and to those citizens that you serve, the best of professional knowledge. Read.....



PARK RANGERS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

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President

Pam Helmke
(408) 277-4539
Fax (408) 277-3241

PLEA Liaison

Don Watstein
(805) 584-4445
Fax (805) 526-7648

Region 1 Director

Sandy Ferreira
(510) 791-4340
Fax (510) 494-4895

Past President

Bob Donohue
(916) 895-4972
Fax (916) 342-6921

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(415) 691-2165

"The Signpost" & "Cal Ranger" Editor

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(408) 336-2948
FAX (By Arrangement)

Region 3 Director

Dave Sloan
(916) 774-5100
Fax (916) 773-5595

Scholarship

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Fax (805) 756-1402

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Fax (818) 548-3789

Office Manager

Doug Bryce
Office (800) 994-2530
Local (916) 558-3734
Fax (916) 387-1179

Region 5 Director

Paul Pettit
(909) 940-5644
Fax (909) 657-8496

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Submissions should be mailed to David Brooks, 560 Hillcrest Dr., Ben Lomond, CA, 95005. Information can also be submitted by telephone at (408) 336-2948. Submission deadlines are the last day of January, March, May, July, September, and November.

DavidB8480@aol.com
CompuServe: 76516,3440
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