



An Overview of the 1999 California Parks Conference

by Mike Chiesa

The 1999 California Parks Conference is over and I am happy to say that it was a tremendous success. San Rafael proved to be an excellent location and the week was full of opportunities of fun and learning for all attendees. There was something for people to do every day and night from Monday through Wednesday and even two all day certified training sessions for people to choose from on Thursday. I have attended many conferences in past years but this was my first opportunity to serve on the conference planning committee. I will admit that serving as a track chair was a lot of work but it was also a lot of fun and well worth the time and effort I devoted to it.

The conference started off with a wet start as some real Northern California rain welcomed people arriving on Monday. All of the field trips went as scheduled as did the pistol competition. Unfortunately, the golf tournament was cancelled due to the weather. I helped coordinate the pistol competition so I had the pleasure of watching the dedicated contestants go through two 30 round courses of fire in the pouring rain. Despite the weather, a good time was had by all. Thanks to the CA Dept. of Corrections for letting us use the San Quentin range and to State Park Ranger Ashford Woody Wood for volunteering to be our rangemaster at the last minute and saving the competition after the unexpected loss of our original rangemaster.

I did not have the opportunity to attend any of the field trips but all of the participants seemed genuinely happy, albeit soaked, when they returned. Monday evening brought the Welcome Reception, hosted by the State Parks Foundation, which had one of the best food spreads I have seen at the reception and was a good way for people to get together. The reception was followed by Ira Bletz's beer tasting. A good time was had by all that attended that event.

The track sessions went well on Tuesday and Wednesday. I only had the opportunity to attend the Public Safety Track sessions since I chaired that track but everyone seemed to get something from each of the sessions. Terry Barber probably had one of the most unusual conference experiences when he got to be rescued by the Sonoma County Sheriff's Helicopter and hung from the bottom of the helicopter on a 100 ft. static long line. Pilot Chris Lambert made sure he had a good ride. This year the entire Public Safety Track was POST certified and there was an 8-hour POST certified Advanced Officer Training session offered on Thursday. In all, a total of 17-advanced officer training hours were available at this conference for interested peace officer attendees. Hopefully this will become standard at all conferences, and give park peace officers a chance to fulfill their 24 hours of advanced officer training hours, required every 2 years, by attending park related training at the California Parks Conference. As a side note, all peace officers are required to complete the 24 hours of training, not just those that work for POST certified agencies.

At the luncheon Tuesday people were entertained by cartoonist Phil Frank and the Peace and Quiet Party presidential candidate, Dan Winkleman. The bay cruise on Tuesday night was a blast with lots of good desserts. Thankfully, the rain had left us by Tuesday morning, so we enjoyed clear skies the rest of the conference. At the banquet Wednesday night, people got to enjoy a good meal and hear park ranger/author Nevada Barr speak. I even got a chance to have her sign my books.



SF Chronicle cartoonist Phil Frank of "Farley" fame demonstrates his skills as he talks about how his comic strip ideas are hatched. (Photo by Jeff Price)

This year's conference was probably one of the best and busiest conferences ever. Those who attended could not help but have a good time and learn something. It is always good to see people you have not seen in a long time and to make new connections. Many thanks are deserved to my fellow conference planning team members for all of their hard work. I would also like to thank the people who helped me with my track, Kim Baker, Scott Pace, and Lori Martin. Your assistance made my job a whole lot easier. I would also like to thank my lone student volunteer for the Thursday sessions, Shannon Sorlee, from San Jose State.

It was good seeing all of you that I saw in San Rafael and I hope to see you again in Southern California in 2000.

From the President's Favorite Shade Tree

by Russ Hauck

An issue was raised in the last (March-April 1999) edition of the *Signpost* that I would like to use this space to respond to and clarify. Bob Donohue wrote an article about PRAC supporting an effort to require Park Rangers to be peace officers. I want to address the issue in a general, overall manner. I also want to respond to some of the issues that Bob raised, but I don't want to appear to be attacking Bob's position, so when I make specific references to Bob's article, please be assured that I am only rebutting the issue mentioned and not discrediting Bob's opinion.

In 1989, AB 805 (now Public Resources Code 4022) was passed which required any person using the title of Park Ranger, Ranger or derivations thereof to be a peace officer. Subsection (b) created a grandfather clause and exempted agencies using the title(s) prior to that time. I conducted a session at the annual conference a few years ago where I theorized that in order for us to standardize as a profession and take strides to improve our overall employment situation we should eliminate the grandfather clause and require any one using the aforementioned titles to be a peace officer. Jeff Gaffney, prior to his appointment as Region 2 Director took the idea and ran with it, having it introduced into legislation.

The board did discuss the topic, but it was presented only as an item of information, and we did not take a vote or any other formal position. I'm sure we will take up the issue again as it moves through the legislative process, so I would very much welcome hearing from the members regarding the subject.

For the record, only John Havicon received any response; none of the other Director or I heard from the members.

The theory behind the subject is the need for a standard for the profession. A police officer is the same from Crescent City to Chula Vista because a standard exists. Park Rangers that are so close to each other geographically that they share a common border are often very different. This creates confusion in the minds of the public, and can (and has in my experience) put the Rangers at risk. As we create a standard, we will make strides to advance the profession.

The other thing that we will accomplish is that we will force agencies to get off the fence. I think back on some of the calls that I was dispatched to

that I was under-trained or under-equipped to deal with, but I responded nonetheless because I believed and I felt that my agency believed that they controlled my actions and if I didn't respond, I could face consequences. By requiring Park Rangers to be peace officers, we will force agencies to choose whether or not they want their ranger staff dealing with enforcement issues. Those that do will give their rangers peace officer status and train them accordingly. Those that don't will have to change the title of their staff to Park Naturalist or Park Resource Technician or Interpretive Specialist or some other title that fits their primary assignment. Then, when such a person is dispatched to handle an enforcement situation, they can comfortably decline because the agency has determined that they don't want to empower and properly train their folks to deal with enforcement issues.

Agencies historically have drawn a line in the sand and encouraged if not expected us to handle anything that occurs on this side of the line, but back off when we encounter something that places our safety at risk. What happens when that something takes place on this side of the line? How many of you non-sworn park rangers have ever contacted someone smoking marijuana? John Havicon did and it nearly cost him his life. While having the status of a peace officer didn't prevent him from being shot, it did enable him to return fire and neutralize the threat.

How many of you non-sworn park rangers have ever contacted someone in the park after closing time? William Abrahamson, a non-sworn Rhode Island park ranger contacted someone and it did cost him his life. Our personal safety is placed at risk every day and it will continue to be until we do something about it. Agencies are reactive. It isn't until a ranger has a gun pointed at him or her that bulletproof vests are purchased and issued. Pepper spray, handcuffs and batons are not considered to be added to the uniform until after a ranger has been injured in a violent fight with someone who was contacted for having an open container of alcohol in the park. Agencies will do nothing to address issues such as these until they are forced to. Should we be content with being reactive, as well? Should we wait until non-sworn rangers are hurt or disciplined for getting involved in a physical altercation with a suspect when their policy requires them to simply observe and report?

The population in California is expected to grow by 50% in the next fifteen years. Many of these people will be immigrants who are from parts of the world where government officials cannot be trusted and a uniform is equated with corruption. Does it make sense for us to wait for this to occur before we take strides to catch up? I believe that would be irresponsible.

Some may question whether enforcement should be part of our job. A quick look at the history of park rangers in the state of California will show that enforcement has always been part of the job, and continues to become increasingly a part of it. According to the book *Rangers of California's State Parks* by Mike Lynch, Galen Clark was appointed as the first Guardian of Yosemite, California's first state park in May of 1866 (133 years ago). His duties were detailed in an eight page letter of instruction and included that Clark and his assistant were to strictly enforce the new state laws enacted to protect the park and they were given the authority to prevent either visitors and settlers from doing anything which would tend to impair the present picturesque appearance of the Valley of its surroundings. Furthermore, Clark was to issue leases to the early settlers in the valley and to persuade them to accept the authority of the Commission and Guardian. Those who refused were to be informed that they would be considered trespassers and liable to the penalties of fine and imprisonment imposed by the last legislation. In 1867 (132 years ago) the commission stated, It is also necessary that the guardian should be endowed by the State with police or constabulary authority, so that offenders may be arrested on the spot where the mischief is done. Clearly, enforcement has always been a part of the park rangers role.

In a report to the Governors council on June 24, 1930 (69 years ago), the Director of the Department of Natural Resources reported that the Commission had acted to designate rangers, as police officers for the state parks of California, with full authority and power as peace officers as defined by the laws of the state, and placed them under the authority of the Chief of the Division of Parks, thereby providing for a regular police organization for the protection of state parks of California.

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From the President's Favorite Shade Tree

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In 1969 (30 years ago) section 830.3 of the California Penal Code was enacted and empowered park rangers (other than state park rangers) as peace officers.

In 1981 (18 years ago) section 830.31(b) was enacted and essentially provided that peace officer authority was a function of the legislature, and a person with peace officer status was so empowered throughout the state.

In 1989 (10 years ago) Public Resource Code 4022 was voted into law requiring anyone using the titles of Park Ranger, etc. to be a peace officer and grandfathering agencies already using the title.

For us to sit back and wait for our agencies to come to their senses and pro-actively strive to give us a safer workplace is an irresponsible position for us to take. We need to be pro-active. We need to be the ones to advance the profession or it simply will not get done.

To address Bob Donohue's article, the first issue Bob raises is that during a budget crisis, parks are usually the first and hardest hit, and forcing agencies to make rangers peace officers with the increased costs could put many ranger programs at risk. I don't see this as a risk at all, and in fact, I see it as being a direct benefit. Laws are passed every day that agencies don't like. Agencies have their own lobbyists in Sacramento to promote legislation that will benefit them and kill that which is perceived to potentially hurt them. Agencies spend a great deal of time, money and energy trying to serve their best interests, but in the end, if they are not successful, they will comply. In this issue, compliance will mean that rangers will be given peace officer status and the requisite training. That is certainly a direct benefit. The other side of this issue is that there is an alternative. If an agency chooses not to make their rangers peace officers, they would be required to change the job title to Naturalist or Interpretive Specialist or Resource Management Technician or some other title. This, too would benefit the employee, because when an enforcement issue were to arise, the employee can point out the fact that the agency chose not to have their staff involved in enforcement issues by not empowering them as peace officers and they should call the police. This creates a safer workplace by forcing the agency off the fence and not putting the under-trained and under-equipped park employee in a potentially unsafe encounter.

The next issue Bob raises is that making the change from generalist ranger to full blown peace officer changes the focus of a rangers duty, and that when the Roseville rangers became full blown peace officers, they were switched to the police department and now one of them is a jailer. In fact, the rangers were armed, full blown peace officers for quite some time and had as part of their responsibilities a formal, curriculum-based Junior Park Ranger program when they worked for the Parks Department. It wasn't until they were administratively transferred to the Police Department that the focus of their duties began to change. (I have a strong opinion on that subject, too; please see my article in the March-April 1999 edition of the Signpost).

Additionally, this proposed change does not mandate full blown peace officer status. In order to be empowered as a peace officer, the law only requires successful completion of the 40-hour 832 course, which costs about \$15 and is available through most junior colleges.

In 1971 (28 years ago), State Park Rangers moved into the realm of full blown peace officers and became a POST agency. I do anticipate that after this proposed change in the law takes effect, and a standard is created for park rangers in the state of California, and agencies choose which side of the fence they wish to be on, that efforts will be made to upgrade the classification of park ranger to full blown peace officer, but I surmise that such a movement would be many years hence.

Bob poses the question, Does that mean I am any less of a ranger because I write municipal code violations rather than penal code violations? By definition, the answer is yes if there are penal and other code violations occurring within his jurisdiction that he is powerless to enforce.

Bob states: PRAC was formed to benefit rangers and create and promote jobs in the ranger field. I would clarify by pointing out that PRAC does not limit its membership to those in the ranger field but rather those in the parks field who have uniformed park experience. Bob goes on to say: This proposed action has the potential of killing many ranger positions throughout the state. I would be willing to wager that not a single job is lost as a result of this proposal. Job titles will change and there will be fewer Park Rangers, but there will also be an increase in Naturalists,

Resource Specialists, etc. In terms of raw numbers, I doubt there would be any change at all.

The PRAC bylaws state: The purpose of this association shall be: To promote the best interests of uniformed park personnel... To mandate that an under-trained, under-equipped park employee not be expected to make an enforcement contact where his or her safety could be put at risk appears to meet this statement.

The very first goal listed in the PRAC manual is "To establish statewide professional standards for rangers through legislation and interagency cooperation." This proposal matches up to that goal word for word. State parks have need for varying levels of enforcement throughout the system. But the fact that a standard is in place for every State Park Ranger up and down the state allows them to function as one entity. While agencies served by PRAC have need for varying levels of enforcement, a standard needs to be in place for the advancement of the profession in California.

In the last three and one half years in my capacity as Region 4 Director and now President I have visited/phoned/faxed/written letters for/ made presentations in support of/ mailed photocopies to/taken on ride-a-longs and/or provided other support for rangers from the City of Los Angeles, the City of San Diego, San Diego County, Orange County, San Bernardino County, The City of Riverside, Monterey County, Sonoma County, the City of Burbank, the City of Santa Barbara, the City of Long Beach, the City of Chico, the City of San Jose, the City of Anaheim and probably others that I can't remember, all of whom were battling with their agencies whether it involved status, equipment or both. At what point do we pool our efforts and collectively seek to address these issues for the betterment of our profession and our respective employment status? The proposal before us provides a perfect opportunity.

Change is always looked upon with uncertainty. But change is constant. The dates I have interspersed throughout this article show that we are overdue for a change such as that proposed by this legislation. We need to embrace change as an opportunity for improvement. Without change, we cannot advance as a society. Without change, we cannot advance as a profession.

Performance Appraisals

by Lori Hynes

As an employee you may dread performance appraisals. As a supervisor you may dread giving them- hopefully not in both cases. Usually, performance appraisals are not looked forward to by either party. Have you ever asked yourself why? Are they too vague or so outdated that they don't even mean anything to you anymore? Should they change as our positions or assignments evolve?

Performance appraisals ideally meet the needs of the employer and the employee. If modifying them on a year to year basis is necessary or making them specific to a particular park division, so be it, it should be done. What is a performance appraisal?

A performance appraisal is a periodic assessment of employee job performance and behavior. It also helps the organization to assure legal compliance in employment-related areas. A performance appraisal directly affects performance through feedback provided to employees. Feedback provided by supervisors during a performance appraisal is typically the employees' primary source of information about their performance. Feedback helps workers know how to improve productivity. People tend to perform better if they know how well they are doing. Information from a performance appraisal also influences other human resource management areas affecting productivity. These areas include compensation, training and development, and staffing. It is more productive to reward, promote, transfer, and terminate employees based on an assessment of their performance. A performance appraisal is the mechanism that provides for this assessment.

Getting Started

A good starting point for supervisors, when improving a performance appraisal is a careful assessment of the organization's existing appraisal system. The next step is defining the performance to be appraised. This may sound simple, but often it is not. Many organizations do not have up to date job descriptions outlining all work activities associated with an employees' position. A supervisor needs to obtain an accurate description of each job in his or her work group.

Evaluation Criteria

The primary reason for having accurate job descriptions is to establish valid evaluation criteria. Evaluation criteria are standards against which to assess an employees' attributes, motivation, abilities, skills, knowledge, or behaviors. To summarize, valid evaluation criteria are criteria that predict employee success.

There has been considerable debate regarding which evaluation criteria are best. Some supervisors prefer performance appraisals that employ definable, observable criteria based on employee behavior or output. They refer to these evaluation criteria as performance criteria.

Many supervisors like the ease of use and simplicity of appraisals based upon the use of personal criteria. Personal criteria are based upon traits or innate characteristics of employees. Examples of this would include traits such as dependability, loy-

alty, team play, and initiative. There are problems with using personal criteria. It leads to vague feedback and there are potential legal challenges based on the results.

Evaluating performance is not cut and dried. Ultimately supervisors must make judgements about individual employees. A supervisor serves as an evaluator-judge rather than a passive recorder of information.

There are fewer subjective appraisal methods such as the Management By Objectives (MBO). This is a collaborative setting of goals between a supervisor and his or her employees (s). The MBO is a performance appraisal method that focuses on results, using employee goal attainment as the evaluation criteria. A crucial element to the success of MBO is the setting of goals that are hard, but achievable. That are specific, measurable, and have a definite time frame for accomplishment. Employees benefit from having clear targets. Vague goals are little better than having no goals at all.

The Performance Review: Feedback

In performance review, a supervisor and an employee periodically discuss performance appraisal results. Performance reviews are effective to the extent they are specific, timely, impersonal, noticeable, and frequent. Review of specific behavior or performance measures are much more informative and more likely to help employees improve their performance. Specific feedback involves relaying to employees precisely what they did well or did not do well.

Some things to keep in mind

1. Performance reviews should be timely so deviations from preferred behavior/performance can be reached.
2. Feedback should be relatively impersonal. Supervisors should try to stress that they are critiquing performance on the job, rather than innate characteristics of the employee.
3. Feedback needs to be noticeable. If feedback is to improve productivity, it must be acknowledged by the employee. Performance review sessions should be planned, and carried out in locations providing privacy between employee and supervisor.
4. Studies indicate that frequent feedback contributes to higher employee satisfaction with supervisors.
5. Beware of negative feedback! It often reduces productivity. You may avoid this by carefully separating criticism of the person as an employee from criticism of the employee as a person.
6. Remember that employees views of fairness are relative, not absolute, and are based on perceptions, not necessarily reality.

I hope this information offered some ideas on how to better evaluate employees or be evaluated. Perhaps it has triggered some to evaluate your own performance appraisals to better suit your needs and give them a face lift. If anyone has what they feel to be an exceptional example of an evaluation, I sure would like to talk with you. Please contact me at 619- 235-1121.

Slim-Jim and Bumper Safety Warning

by John Havicon

A warning is being put out to anyone that may use a Slim-Jim or any other tool to unlock vehicle doors that are equipped with driver/passenger side airbags. Fatalities have already been reported of people attempting to unlock the doors of these vehicles. The Slim-Jims have punctured the airbags, then act as a projectile when hit by the force. If you know the locked vehicle has side airbags, it may be worth telling your visitor sorry and call them a tow truck or locksmith.

While I on the subject of safety and projectiles, here's one more. Use caution when at a vehicle accident, of the front and rear bumpers. If the bumpers are damaged, those 5-mph shock absorbers may be damaged and under pressure. These shock absorbers can also become high speed projectiles and can be deadly. Remember, survey the scene and try to approach vehicles from the side, if possible and not from the front or back.

Mountain Lion Attacks And Hunting

by Larry Baird

Ranger, Box Springs Mountain Regional Park

A while back there was an initiative on the California ballot to allow hunting of mountain lions. Those who favored the initiative put forth the theory that lions have become a menace because they have not been hunted for many generations and no longer fear man. I'm suspicious of any campaign claims, and although the theory sounds reasonable and is probably valid, I have an alternate theory.

I think that it is possible that it is not necessarily the hunting of mountain lions that reduces attacks, but possibly a more Pavlovian theory. Consider the possibility that the lions associate human smell with burnt gunpowder and loud noise.

The most publicized attacks have been in parks, like Caspers Park in Orange County and Big Bend National Park in Texas. Both are areas where firearms and shooting have been banned for years. Areas that have shooting sports, whether target or historical reenactment seem to be free of attacks and aggressive behavior by the lions.

If my theory holds true, and it has to this point, lion attacks could be prevented by introducing recreational events to our parks that include gun fire.

Civil war, cowboy and other historical reenactment groups are some of the fastest growing recreational activities. The cost to park districts to host such events is nil and can bring revenue to the parks in the form of user and admission fees. The cost to produce a civil war battle, just in costuming would be prohibitive for most park systems, but with reenactment groups it becomes both revenue producing and enhances historical interpretation. If my theory is confirmed, it also enhances public safety by instilling the fear of man and reducing attacks by mountain lions.

If any member has information that would prove or disprove my theory, please write to me at PO Box 7240, Moreno Valley, California 92552, or e-mail at Bairdco@aol.com.

Are You Frustrated About Getting Ahead??

by Tom Smith

Recently, there were some openings for Senior Ranger in our local park agency. Obviously, there were several people who applied, some former students of mine. When the announcement was made, there were some very disappointed people. Certainly there should have been. You can, however, overcome disappointments. The first thing that you should do is ask yourself how you are performing. Is yesterday the same as today? Not long ago I read an excerpt of a speech to the Southwestern Society of American Foresters that was given by the then Chief of the United States Forest Service, F. Dale Robinson. The subject was Getting From the Backwoods to the Boardroom. I would like to share with you some of the important issues that he brought up in that speech about getting ahead in our profession.

1. Performance: People who represent our profession well have a track record of outstanding performance. It takes consistently good performance over years to get ahead. A resume filled with accomplishments, not just jobs. Do you perform in spurts, or are you consistent?

2. Competition: Competition for top jobs are really from among top performers. It is a very competitive world. To have a successful career you just cannot let events pass you by until it is too late. You have to constantly improve, continually stretch your capabilities, grow on the job, and be equal to your competition; our peers in your own department!

3. Flexibility: Take advantage of opportunities to broaden your experience, build your reputation, and make necessary sacrifices along the way.

4. Exposure: Take an opportunity to show off what you can do. Are you getting beat out of promotion because someone is more visible than you? Things might not be what you think. Some people have reputations that are better than their abilities. Some people have better abilities than their reputations. Exposure just allows you to get this reputation into the eyes of others.

Dale believes that if you took some top people in the Forest Service and studied what got them there, you might come up with the following profile:

1. They have a trail of success
2. They take calculated risks that have a high batting average to be successful. They avoid comfort zones and ruts.
3. They have a positive attitude that permits them to handle failures and setbacks as learning experiences without falling back into that safe mode
4. They are great problem solvers and deal well with people.
5. They have a strong commitment and dedication to a goal and are willing to put forth extra effort and make sacrifices to achieve.

I always also thought that you might also find people that were able to come up with, and implement good ideas. Is that you he is talking about, above? If not, maybe you have some work to do. Active participation in PRAC is a good place to start.

Job Posting

Girl Scouts of Santa Clara County is seeking a full-time Camp Ranger for one of its properties in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Full-time, live-in job focussing on maintenance to site and facilities and support to user groups. Qualified applicant will have experience in land management, facility maintenance, and management of facility systems such as water filtration, septic and pool. Minimum age 21 years. Competitive salary and housing on site. EOE Contact (408) 287-4170, ext. 257 or fax resume to (408) 287-8025.

Phil Franks Would Be Proud

This is an actual letter from and a reply to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, State of Michigan:

Dear Mr. DeVries:

Subject: DEQ File No. 97-59-0023-1 T11N, R10W, Sec. 20, Montcalm County

It has come to the attention of the Department of Environmental Quality that there has been recent unauthorized activity on the above-referenced parcel of property. You have been certified as the legal landowner and/or contractor who did the following unauthorized activity: Construction and maintenance of two wood debris dams across the outlet stream of Spring Pond. A permit must be issued prior to the start of this type of activity. A review of the Department's files shows that no permits have been issued.

Therefore, the Department has determined that this activity is in violation of Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams, of the Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of the Public Acts of 1994, being sections 324.30101 to 324.30113 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, annotated.

The Department has been informed that one or both of the dams partially failed during a recent rain event, causing debris and flooding at downstream locations. We find that dams of this nature are inherently hazardous and cannot be permitted.

The Department therefore orders you to cease and desist all unauthorized activities at this location, and to restore the stream to a free-flow condition by removing all wood and brush forming the dams from the stream channel. All restoration work shall be completed no later than January 31, 1998.

Please notify this office when the restoration has been completed so that a follow-up site inspection may be scheduled by our staff. Failure to comply with this request or any further unauthorized activity on the site may result in this case being referred for elevated enforcement action.

We anticipate and would appreciate your full cooperation in this matter. Please feel free to contact me at this office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

David L. Price, District Representative
Land and Water Management Division

Response

Dear Mr. Price:

Re: DEQ File No. 97-59-0023; T11N, R10W, Sec 20; Montcalm County

Your certified letter dated 12/17/97 has been handed to me to respond to. You sent out a great deal of carbon copies to a lot of people, but you neglected to include their addresses. You will, therefore, have to send them a copy of my response.

First of all, Mr. Ryan De Vries is not the legal landowner and/or contractor at 2088 Dagget, Pierson, Michigan—I am the legal owner and a couple of beavers are in the (State unauthorized) process of constructing and maintaining two wood “debris” dams across the outlet stream of my Spring Pond. While I did not pay for, authorize, nor supervised their dam project, I think they would be highly offended that you call their skillful use of natural building materials “debris.” I would like to challenge your department to attempt to emulate their dam project any time and/or any place you choose. I believe I can safely state there is no way you could ever match their dam skills, their dam resourcefulness, their dam ingenuity, their dam persistence, their dam determination and/or their dam work ethic.

As to your request, I do not think the beavers are aware that they first must fill out a dam permit prior to the start of this type of dam activity.

My first dam question to you is: (1) are you trying to discriminate against my Spring Pond Beavers or (2) do you require all beavers throughout this State to conform to said dam request? If you are not discriminating against these particular beavers, through the Freedom of Information Act I request completed copies of all those other applicable beaver dam permits that have been issued. Perhaps we will see if there really is a dam violation of Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams, of the Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act, Act 451 of the Public Acts of 1994, being sections 324.30101 to 324.30113 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, annotated.

I have several concerns. My first concern is— aren't the beavers entitled to legal representation? The Spring Pond Beavers are financially destitute and are unable to pay for said representation — so the State will have to provide them with a dam lawyer. The Department's dam concern that either one or both of the dams failed during a recent rain event causing flooding is proof that this is a natural occurrence which the department is required to protect. In other words, we should leave the Spring Pond Beavers alone rather than harassing them and calling their dam names.

If you want the stream “restored” to a dam free-flow condition—please contact the beavers—but if you are going to arrest them (they obviously did not pay any attention to your dam letter —being unable to read English)—be sure they are read the Miranda rights first. As for me, I am not going to cause more flooding or dam debris jams by interfering with these dam builders. If you want to hurt these dam beavers—be aware I am sending a copy of your dam letter and this response to PETA. If your dam Department seriously finds all dams of this nature inherently hazardous and truly will not permit their existence in this State—I seriously hope you are not selectively enforcing this dam policy—or once again both I and the Spring Pond Beavers will scream prejudice!

In my humble opinion, the Spring Pond Beavers have a right to build their unauthorized dams as long as the sky is blue, the grass is green and water flows downstream. They have more dam right than I do to live and enjoy Spring Pond. If the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection lives to its name, it should protect the natural resources (Beavers) and the environment (Beavers' Dams).

So, as far as the beavers and I are concerned, this dam case can be referred for more elevated enforcement action right now. Why wait until 1/31/98? The Spring Pond Beavers may be under the dam ice then and there will be no way for you or your dam staff to contact/harass them then.

In conclusion, I would like to bring to your attention a real environmental quality (health) problem in the area. It is the bears. Bears are actually defecating in our woods. I definitely believe you should be persecuting the defecating bears and leave the beavers alone. If you are going to investigate the beaver dam, watch your step! (The bears are not careful where they dump!)

Being unable to comply with your dam request, and being unable to contact you on your dam answering machine, I am sending this response to your dam office via another government organization—the dam USPS. Maybe, someday, it will get there.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Tvedten
cc: PETA

a Founders Thank you

I want to thank Tom Smith and the Founders for choosing me for this years Founders Award. I very much appreciate the Award and the continuing support I have received over the years from those who are the Founders. Tom was President when I joined in 1979 and in July 1980 when I began this career as Executive Manager of PRAC.

I approached this award with considerable trepidation not knowing how the membership would feel about my receiving it. It has never been my belief that I should approach my responsibilities as a popularity contest but rather to do and say what is best for the Association and its members. This attitude has made me a few definite enemies over the years. So, when I saw everyone in the audience rise and applaud, almost at once, I was very happy.

Some retirees fish, golf, hunt, etc. but I like to manage organizations and plan conferences. I enjoy the activity and especially the wonderful people I work with and for. Thank you for the nice plaque, the honor, and your appreciation as well all you have done, over the years, for me and my wife, Carol.

Doug



Tom "Smitty" Smith presents Doug Bryce with the PRAC Founding Members Award. (Photo by Jeff Price)

Oxygen Regulator Recall

Allied Healthcare Products, Inc. has issued an Urgent Device Recall for Life Support Products (LSP) oxygen Regulators. Allied is voluntarily recalling ALL LSP oxygen regulators to replace the aluminum components in the units' high-pressure chambers with brass components. The action is being taken in response to reports of fire and explosions, the exact causes of which remain unknown.

THE MODELS SUBJECT TO THIS RECALL CONSIST OF THE LSP 106, LSP 270, LSP 280, LSP 370 AND LSP 735 SERIES REGULATORS.

LSP oxygen regulator users will be able to have the parts replaced at any of the authorized service centers at no charge to the user.

In May 1997, Allied conducted a recall to add a sintered bronze filter to the LSP 270 series regulator only. **ALTHOUGH THE LSP 270 SERIES REGULATOR MAY HAVE ALREADY BEEN RETROFITTED WITH THE SINTERED BRONZE FILTER, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE ALUMINUM COMPONENTS IN THE HIGH-PRESSURE CHAMBER BE REPLACED WITH BRASS COMPONENTS TO ENHANCE SAFETY.**

For more information contact:

Recall Coordinator at 800-231-5273 Mon. through Fri. 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (CST)

or Write:

LSP Regulator Recall Center, Allied Healthcare Products, Inc., 1720 Sublette Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63110

E-Mail: RRC@ALLIEDHPL.COM

Additional Information on the recall can also be found on the following web sites:

<http://www.alliedhpi.com/announcements.html>

<http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/oxyreg.html>

<http://www.life-assist.com/recallinfo.html>

A Response

by John Havicon

After reading Bob Donahue's article and talking to several members in my region, I felt I must respond to this. The subject is about legislation to remove the "grandfather clause" from the Public Resource Code 4022. The law states that the title of "Ranger," "Park Ranger" or "Forest Ranger" are only to be used by "Peace Officers" employed as such. PRAC opposed and testified against this legislation in 1990. The grandfather clause was put in place to allow agencies that had designated their employees as "Rangers," but who were not "Peace Officers," prior to the passage of this law, to continue as such.

The discussion at the board meetings has been as information by a PRAC member about legislation to remove this grandfather clause, to force those agencies "off the fence." There has never been a vote on this by the board. It was only presented to us as information. Bob is right. If any decision is made on whether to support this, it should be by a general membership vote. A change in this law could affect agencies throughout our state. It may force these agencies off the fence, but in what direction?

My personal feelings are this. Most governing agencies generally take the path of least resistance. If this clause is dropped and you go to your board of supervisors and challenge them to designate you as a peace officer because your a "Park Ranger." I think they will weigh the cost of the change

and rename your title—a "Park Aide" or "Technician" or something like that, rather than pay the cost of training and equipment to make you a "Peace Officer." That's like taking two steps backwards.

I think the title Park Ranger is an honorable title. I am proud to be one, as I think most of you are too and it doesn't matter whether we are peace officers, public officers, interpreters, resource managers, fire fighters or what ever hat we must wear. Most of us are in this field to preserve and protect our natural resources for the future and teach others about it. We have all worked too hard to get to this position. Some of the agencies of the members that I represent have Rangers that are lucky enough not to do any law enforcement. They do interpretation, they do maintenance, they cut trails or fire breaks. I have nothing against Park Ranger-Peace Officers. I am one and I think that in a park setting, if I had to choose between a Park Ranger-Peace Officer and a Deputy Sheriff, I would choose the Park Ranger to enforce the laws in the park. Our approach and our knowledge is so much different than a sheriff's. I just think that some agencies need that evolutionary step to get from Park Ranger to Park Ranger-Peace Officer.

If this ever does go to a membership vote, please consider it's possible effects. It may work for some agencies, but it also tears the thread that holds us together.

Goin to the Dogs

by George Struble

How many times have you been out in the field and had to contact dog owners about their dog being off leash? From the sound of things at the conference this year, many agencies are dealing with this sensitive and emotionally charged issue. The most common rebuttal is, there is no place to run my dog in the city off leash or I live in an apartment and Fido needs to get his exercise. On the other side of the coin, there are the non-dog owners that maybe fearful of the very site of a dog. For those rangers that have been in the field a while I'm sure you have seen all aspects of dog contacts. For those who haven't, you will!

I have been trying to strike a medium ground for dog owners and the non-dog owners of the city. The solution I have been looking into is an off leash dog park for the city. For those of you interested in establishing such a park, I would like to share my findings. I have been researching dog parks for a while now trying to come up with a set of standards that could be used in a site selection process. There are many factors effecting the optimal site to erect a dog park.

There are many considerations when deciding where to set up an off-leash dog park. The number one question I had was, how large should the park be? After talking with numerous agencies and searching on the Internet I came up with a size of 2-5 acres. Parks smaller than 2 acres reported turf management problems due to excessive use. The impact needs to be spread out over a large area so that trampling under foot (and paw), as well as urine waste is not so excessive that grass can not grow. It has been suggested that a city may be able to get by with multiple smaller parks but I could not find any cities that actually had numerous smaller parks.

The next factor to consider was impact to residences. All of the cities I talked to said that this factor weighted heavily in the site chosen for the park. There can be a smell associated

with dog parks, which makes placement close to residences an unlivable option. Noise in the morning and evening from barking also would affect the quality of life around the park.

Another major issue in the implementation of a dog park facility is cost. Most cities I talked to had additional funding available from volunteer dog groups, and some had corporate sponsors for the parks. Volunteer group also continued to make improvements on the site through donations in addition to policing the park on a volunteer basis.

Other factors to include are:

- Parking
- Fencing, 4-6 foot
- Protection of sensitive areas
- Water
- Sanitation, prohibit food & standing water, feces removal
- Lighting
- Hours of operation
- Turf management
- Small dog area
- Volunteer groups
- Increased maintenance hours

The final factor I will discuss is liability. It is a hot topic and a source of debate regarding implementing dog parks. In my research, I found only one suit brought against a city and the case is in litigation. Cities will need to change their leash laws to further reduce their liability, placing the responsibility back on the owners of the dogs.

Dog parks are increasing in popularity and give residents an area to go to run there dog without interfering with other park users recreational experience. By strategically placing dog parks, while concurrently seeking support and funding from the community, off-leash dog parks can be a success. If you need any information feel free to call or e-mail me, 818 548-3795 or Calpinepig@aol.com

Smitty's Book Report

Gosh, what a great conference! It is always nice to see old friends and make new ones. It was also good to get into the fray and help with the planning process. Unfortunately, the golf tournament was rained out, but I did get to go to Point Reyes instead. I hadn't been there in several years. It was the first time I had been able to go through the visitor center there. It was nicely put together by a former NPS Albright Academy friend, Dave Pugh.

Whenever you attend conferences, or get together with people in your profession, you learn a lot. That is a given. But sometimes budgets, or other reasons, cause you to be able to not attend. Points out the necessity of picking up a book or two, or a professional journal once in a while and catching up on what is going on. One of the things that I see happening, is the crisis that is the encroachment of development and the challenges that it presents to the management of our parks. I bought a book from Island Press about just that a month or so ago, and had it kind of waiting in the wings for the next *Signpost*. The book is entitled, **Stewardship Across Boundaries**. The book points out that every bit of land, however large or small, has boundaries. Usually, there is no thought about ecological boundaries. Political fencelines are drawn, and our agencies expect us to manage lands that have one use on one side of the fence, and

another use on the other. In our county, as an example, we have three agencies that have common boundaries or are separated by only a road. Also around here, people are starting to wake up to the fact that open space is going fast. Like so many books of this type, it is edited. The Editors did a good job of gathering the proper people to discuss the proper subject matter. The book discusses how to understand the effects of administrative boundaries, what types of boundaries there are (including the challenges of outdoor recreation on boundaries), and gives a lot of case studies. The book concludes by telling how you build bridges across the different boundary types. I found it very interesting, as I have been watching this subject develop over the years (Hardly no one is older than I am!) and was beginning to really give the matter some serious thought.

Mountain lions are being seen more, exotic plants are taking over, and other obvious changes are happening all around us. It is time for all of us to also take an active interest.

Knight, Richard L. and Landes, Peter B. et al, **Stewardship Across Boundaries**, Island Press, Covelo, California, 1998.

I do not have what I paid for it within reach, anyway. It want much. You can get the price on the web at Amazon.com.

Oxygen Safety

by Pam Helmke

Many park agencies use emergency oxygen for EMS responses. For the trained EMS responder medical oxygen is a valuable, often life saving tool, and it can also be very hazardous. Although oxygen does not burn it actively supports combustion. A material that may not burn in normal air may burn in high pressure pure oxygen. This can include the metals found in oxygen regulators and oxygen cylinders. Some general guidelines for reducing the risk of fire when using medical oxygen are provided below:

Storage, Maintenance and Handling

DO NOT allow smoking or any type of open flame around oxygen.

Store oxygen cylinders and regulators in clean, dry locations away from direct sunlight.

DO NOT allow the post valves, regulators, gauges, and fittings to come into contact with oils, greases, organic lubricants, rubber or any other combustible material.

Make sure that any cleaning, repair or transfilling of oxygen equipment is performed by qualified, properly trained staff.

DO NOT work on oxygen equipment with ordinary tools. Designate special tools, clean them and store them for use with oxygen equipment only.

Ensure that any components added to the regulator, such as gauge guards, are installed so that they do not block the regulator vents holes.

Use plugs, caps and plastic bags to protect "off duty" equipment from dust and dirt.

Particulate migration from the cylinder can be minimized by the installation of a standoff tube (bayonet) at the inlet of the post valve.

Use

Make sure that staff using oxygen equipment are adequately

trained in its operation and in oxygen safety and have knowledge of the manufacturer's instructions for using the equipment.

Visually inspect the post valve gasket and regulator inlet prior to installation. If they are not visually clean they should be removed from service and not used until serviced by a qualified person.

Momentarily open and close ("crack") the post valve to blow out debris prior to installing a regulator.

Ensure that the regulator is set with the flow knob in the "OFF" position before attaching it to the cylinder.

Position the equipment so that the valve is pointed away from the user and any other persons.

Open the cylinder slowly and completely to minimize the heat produced and achieve the desired flow conditions within the equipment.

DO NOT look at the regulator pressure gauge until the cylinder valve is fully opened.

More information, guidance and training in the safe use of oxygen and fire safety can be obtained from the following organizations:

Compressed Gas Association, 1725 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1004, Arlington, VA 22202-4102 (www.cganet.com)

National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02269-9101 (www.nfpa.org)

American Society for Testing and Materials, 100 Barr Harbor Drive,

West Conshohocken, PA 19428-2959 (www.astm.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Division of Safety Research. Oxygen Regulator Flash Severely Burns One Fire Fighter - Florida, Report Number 98-F23. This report is available on the NIOSH home page at: www.cdc.gov/niosh/firehome.html

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Board Officers
1999**

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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 (831) 336-2948.

Submission deadlines ARE THE LAST DAY OF JANUARY, MARCH, MAY, JULY, SEPTEMBER, AND NOVEMBER.

EMAIL:

PRANGERD@IX.NETCOM.COM

Membership Application

NAME _____		
ADDRESS _____		
CITY _____	STATE _____	ZIP _____
PHONE _____		
HOME _____	WORK _____	
EMPLOYER OR SCHOOL _____		
JOB CLASSIFICATION OR MAJOR _____		

Voting Membership
REGULAR \$45 _____

Non-voting Membership
AGENCY:
(1-25 PERSONS-6 MAILINGS)..... \$75 _____
(> 25 PERSONS-12 MAILINGS)..... \$100 _____
STUDENT \$20 _____
ASSOCIATE \$35 _____
SUPPORTING \$100 _____

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