



PRAC Attends EBRPD Safety Fair

by Mike Chiesa

On Wednesday, September 27th, PRAC participated in the East Bay Regional Park District Safety Fair held at Castle Rock Park in Walnut Creek. PRAC members Patty Walker with EBRPD and Bruce Weidman with the City of Walnut Creek helped me with staffing the PRAC display. Many EBRPD employees stopped at the display to learn more about PRAC and to address any concerns or issues they had, to learn about current events, and to make suggestions.

PRAC donated a year free membership as a prize for the drawing that was held at the safety fair. Helen Moore of EBRPD was the lucky winner of the year free membership and is a first time PRAC member.

The event was a lot of fun and I hope that we have gained some new members from it and perhaps inspired some existing members to become more involved. Thank you to the East Bay Regional Park District for inviting PRAC to attend this event. I wish to extend many thanks to Patty Walker and Bruce for their assistance at the event. I would also like to welcome aboard the prizewinner, Helen Moore, as a new member of PRAC. I hope PRAC gets to participate in the event again next year.

Resource Management Workshop Wrap-up

by Ken Miller

On September 18th, six people, Jodi Issacs and myself braved the 100 degree heat and had a great workshop. We spent the morning touring Russian Ridge Preserve where the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is conducting an ongoing program to reduce invasive non-native plants and to increase the native plant species diversity. We talked about prescribed burning, collecting native seed to propagate and use for reseeding and drill seeding. After a nice lunch in an air-conditioned office, we hit the road and drove for 30 minutes to Pulgas Ridge Preserve where we looked at an ongoing acacia and eucalyptus removal project. The three items I came up with that I feel are necessary for any resource management project to succeed are:

- A buy-in from all employee levels at an agency
- Full commitment and follow up to a project
- Public education

We went over different strategies to obtain these goals. Two people camped the night before as a way not to deal with the nasty traffic leading into the Bay Area the morning of the workshop. I think that this was a great strategy and one that PRAC should encourage for future workshops. Thanks to all who attended for making the workshop a success.

Another Ranger Story

by Roger Abe, City of San Jose

A wail? A moan? A scream? Was it human?

I heard it while I was on bike patrol, riding the service road through picnic areas. The sound came from a nearby undeveloped part of the park. I rode toward the sound. It had stopped. I scanned the place from where the sound had seemed to emanate. A maze of old walnut trees, relics of a former orchard, met my gaze. Silence.

Off to the right, a hundred yards away in the parking lot, I saw a middle-aged woman staring in the same direction that I had been looking. I rode up to her and said, "Hi." Pointing, she said, "There's a strange man over there with no shirt on. Did you hear that screaming? It was him!"

From the President's Desk

Dear Fellow members,

Summer is finally over! We have made it through the busiest time and now it's time to recover and rehabilitate our parks back to normal; at least for many of us. My parks stay busy through the fall because of the Salmon run and all of the fishermen.

Conference planning is moving along. We are still short in the operations track with volunteers. As you know the Conference is going to be held right here in Sacramento. The theme is *2001, An Open Space Odyssey*, centering on technology use in our jobs. Don't worry, I'll leave HAL, the nightmare computer, on my desk. Anyone interested in helping out, please get a hold of the conference chair, CeeCee Cryer. I am surprised that only a few agencies in the Sacramento area have been willing to help out.

Election time is here again. We are looking for candidates for the board for Districts 1, the north coast, (north of San Francisco); District 3, the central San Joaquin and Sacramento Valley; and District 5, the San Diego, Imperial Valley area. We have a lot of sharp, enthusiastic members, who can help take this organization to the next level. The Board members' job is: organizing events and training sessions in their area, attend the quarterly board meetings, to provide support for the agencies in their district, and writing articles for *The Signpost*. If anyone is interested or knows of the ideal someone please contact me at (916) 875-6672, e-mail: >onbelay@innercite.com<.

Our newsletter, *The Signpost* is our basic way of communicating with our members. Our Editor, David Brooks, does an excellent job of organizing my garbled articles and transforming into something amazing. Thanks David! (Patty too!) I would like to encourage all of you to get involved. If something newsworthy happens in your agency or park, something unusual or funny, was a life saved? or some legislation is occurring that may be beneficial, write about it, or pass it on to your board member. I would like to keep *The Signpost* as diverse as possible.

Lastly I want to congratulate the Santa Clara and Sacramento County Rangers for getting their names included in the 1937 retirement act, opening the door for safety retirement for their agencies. Thank you Governor Davis for signing A.B 439. Hopefully this will help give some direction to other park ranger agencies seeking the same.

John Havicon

President

Roseville Park Rangers P.O.S.T. to Oblivion

Hi, I'm Ken Weiner. I have been a park ranger with the Cities of Palo Alto, San Jose, Roseville, National Park Service (seasonal), and currently the US Army Corps of Engineers.

My opinion on the Ranger Peace Officer issue is as follows.

In Roseville we went to firearms with the support of a former Police Chief during 1992. We were transferred against our will (Dave Sloane and myself) to the police department in 1994. Shotguns, warrant and gang sweeps all followed.

We were recognized by P.O.S.T. in 1997. We were unable through negotiations to breach a \$ 4 per hour pay discrepancy between officers & ourselves even though we handled all the crimes a patrol officer would in our parks and the neighborhoods around the parks.

In January 1998, the Police Chief told us we could become officers if we went through the F.T.O. program and the park patrol duties would become a rotational bid slot for patrol. We could return to our ranger position if we did not pass the F.T.O. program or decided to return to our ranger positions. A congenital (born with) depth perception condition was discovered in my right eye during the

officer F.T.O. program. The City of Roseville Risk Manager ordered the Police Department to pull me from the field. A month long struggle ensued with me being transferred against my will to a Correctional Officer position in the jail. This resulted in loss of pay, safety retirement and all of my 11 years worth of seniority.

I think rangers are very eager like we were to embrace the idea of professional "Peace Officer" certification. You should set up "grandfather" provisions if you do so. The fact that my performance evaluations were outstanding and the regional authority in depth perception Dr. John Keltner from UC Davis Med Center said my eyes were fine for firearms use & emergency driving made little matter. The 'P.O.S.T. standards' we adopted drove me out.

Dave Sloane passed the F.T.O. program and is currently a neighborhood police officer. The two ranger positions were never filled. Roseville Police pays reserve officers to patrol the parks, often only until 8 p.m. in summer. The 2 park ranger positions were recently cut out of the budget and I'll leave it up to you decide if Roseville's Parks are better off.

I revived my park ranger career with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Thanks, Ken.

[HTTP://PRAC.WS](http://PRAC.WS)

The Signpost

Park Ranger Title

by Janet Goes

I work for the East Bay Regional Park District. I think that there should be a lot more thought and discussion brought to this legislation. I have been a Park Ranger and am now a Park Supervisor and take great pride in both of those titles. I think that the morale of the folks that have been Park Rangers for years and now face the possibility of becoming Maintenance Workers, Park Staff, Garbage Staff, etc., is very one sided.

The Peace Officers already have a very clear title. Why do they need to infringe on ours? The basic answer is for them to remain Peace Officers and "us" to remain what we have always been, Park Rangers. If it is a safety issue to know if the responding staff are "sworn or non sworn" then perhaps the Peace Officer status should be the primary title with all of the other jobs falling into other categories. Park

Rangers have always been there to provide assistance, first aid, directions, interpretation, maintenance, encouragement, and appreciation for the outdoors. Police are recognized as enforcing the rules. Rangers are recognized for encouraging compliance, educating, and offering solutions for visitors who are not as polite as most. Park Rangers have always been approachable. Police Officers through no fault of their own are a bit more intimidating. Park Rangers have a primary duty to their park; becoming sworn to maintain that title also includes responding out of our jurisdictions for assistance calls. I think that this could put some Rangers at risk. If you want to be an Officer keep the title. I would be interested in the e-mail address for the PORAC so that I could also share my concerns with them. Thanks for the opportunity to vent.

(Web masters note <PORACposts@aol.com>)

Governor Davis Signs New Life Jacket Bill

by John Havicon

The Governor has signed some new bills that will affect how we enforce the wearing of life jackets. AB 2538, sponsored by the Department of Boating and Waterways requires children under 12 years of age to wear a life jacket on any vessel under 26 feet in length. The existing law required children under 7 years of age to wear life jackets.

AB 2538 also requires water skiers, with the exception of trick, jump and barefoot skiers), to also wear lifejackets. All users of personal watercraft, (jet skis), or being towed behind a boat, must also wear life jackets.

In lieu of wearing a life jacket, any person engaged in slalom skiing on a marked course or engaged in barefoot, jump or trick skiing may elect to wear a wetsuit designed for the activity and labeled by the manufacturer as a water ski wetsuit. A Coast Guard approved personal flotation device is required to be carried in the tow vessel for each skier electing to wear the approved wetsuit.

AB 2538 also changes the description of personal watercraft to mean a vessel of 13 feet or less, propelled by machinery, that is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel, rather than the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel.

Another Ranger Story

Continued from page 1

Following her fingertip, I did see someone walking through the trees. Thanking her, I rode off saying I would investigate the matter. I lost sight of him for a minute among the trees—then there he was. I dismounted twenty feet away and walked the bike closer. He was dark-skinned with tan. No shirt, yellow sports-styled shorts, no socks, battered old white sneakers, late twenties or early thirties, standing in a crouch on a small mound of packed dirt, perhaps made by squirrels years ago. He was turning his body and arms through slow Tai Chi-like movements.

We greeted each other. I asked what he was doing. He said practicing his martial arts. With little prompting he was soon telling me about his two divorces, how he was coming home and starting over. His eyes were distant, and from his tone of voice, I knew they were full of memories and pain. He had a collection of fast food containers, a couple of beer bottles and miscellaneous trash at his feet. I asked him to please take his trash with him when

he left, and he said he would. I said good-bye and left him there, half-naked, in the dry, dwindling orchard, standing on a pile of dirt, practicing his martial art, trying to sort out his life in an isolated corner of the park. I heard no more screams and received no more complaints that day.

I wasn't the first time and probably won't be the last time that I will meet a park visitor who has come to merge back into the harmony of nature, to reestablish a connection with the world, to free himself of pain and troubles. For the most part, they do it quietly, mulling in introspection. Sometimes the anguish is so unbearable that it must be released externally. We all have days like that. I try to remind myself that while I am regularly trained in officer safety, legal updates, liability issues affecting park rules, etc., I am the human element of the service chain. And I hope I can meet each situation with understanding and compassion equal to how I would want to be respected when I run into a tough patch.

My Thoughts on the Peace Officer Ranger Issue

by Matt Cerkel

After reading the comments in the last two *Signposts*, I wanted to share my views on the proposed Park Ranger/Peace Officer Legislation. I strongly support the Legislation because it would help standardize our profession and reduce public confusion on what authority rangers have. I feel that some who are opposed to the Legislation feel if you are a peace officer ranger that makes you overly specialized and takes away from other duties. I disagree; just because you are a peace officer doesn't mean you can't perform other duties; Russ Haucks' Ode to a Park Ranger captures this fact quite well. I also feel standards help us all professionally.

First of all PRAC needs to clarify what the Legislation means if it is passed. If I understand correctly, the Legislation removes the clause that allowed agencies with rangers to keep the job title even if their rangers weren't peace officers. This would mean that agencies with non-peace officers would have to choose to have their rangers become peace officers or change the job title. Also, I have never seen anything in the Penal Code (other codes) authorizing rangers to be public officers with citation authority. I seem to recall a *Signpost* article on this a few years back. Finally, for peace officer rangers, what takes precedence: the authority granted by the state under 830.31(b) PC or an agency's manual or guidelines? I believe an agency should not infringe on the authority the state grants. This is in reference to the meth lab incident with the Mid-Peninsula Open Space Rangers and following disciplinary action and also the political shenanigans going on in LA. The Mid-Peninsula rangers should have been commended and LA City should take a step forward not back. In both cases management should be ashamed of itself.

Looking at the history of rangers in this state it is clear; law enforcement has always been part of a rangers duties. I feel many are not aware of this fact or choose to ignore it. Back in 1867 when Yosemite was a state park it was felt the rangers should be endowed by the State with police authority. In 1917 my employer hired its first rangers and they had enforcement duties and since at least the 1940's they have been peace officers, originally deputized by the sheriff. In 1976 my agency adopted the job title park ranger to qualify as peace officers, independent of being deputized. Since its founding in 1928 the State Park System rangers have been peace officers. Finally, one of the founding fathers of the National Park Service, Horace Albright, stated "the ranger is primarily a policeman and the ranger force is the park police force (visit www.rangerfop.com and read E-Pro Ranger E-Ranger 1 and 2).

Traditional law enforcement is great for back up but has little desire to deal with or understanding of park law enforcement. This leaves park law enforcement to us. Having rangers with different levels of authority just confuses the public and can endanger rangers at both levels of authority. If you wear a badge and are asked to do law enforcement you should be a peace officer.

To illustrate the confusion of having rangers with different levels of authority lets discuss Marin County. Not counting federal agencies, Marin has four agencies employing rangers: California State Parks (CSP), Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD and my employer), Marin County Parks (MCP) and Marin County Open Space (MCOSD). CSP and MMWD rangers are armed peace officers, while MCP and MCOSD rangers are public officers with citation authority, the agencies share borders, the uniforms are nearly identical and all drive trucks that say ranger. This can confuse the public and endanger rangers, a non-peace officer ranger can be mistaken for a peace officer and a peace officer ranger can be mistaken for a non-peace officer. I've had incidents were I've been mistaken for a non-peace officer and in cases they could have become dangerous. In one incident an individual refused to present his fishing license when requested. He stated that I didn't have the authority to check, wasn't a peace officer and wasn't allowed to be armed. He explained an article in the local newspaper about MCOSD rangers getting citation authority said so. I finally gained his compliance after he realized I was a peace officer. But for a while I thought it might turn into a physical confrontation. Since that time I've thought it was dangerous to have rangers with different levels of authority.

Most uniformed professions seem to have standards and minimum training levels. There are no questions about standards or training if you are a firefighter, deputy sheriff, security guard, police officer, or game warden. Should rangers be any different? We need a clearly defined standard for our profession and being a peace officer would be an important part of that. I realize some will lose the ranger title if the Legislation is passed, but that is a small price to pay to bring our profession to the same level of standards and training that other uniformed professions hold themselves to.

I feel that some opposed to the Legislation have an anti-law enforcement bias. Being a peace officer ranger is more than being a cop. Besides being a peace officer, I am an EMT, wildland firefighter, perform search and rescue, conduct interpretive walks, do maintenance and resource management, and find time to deal with the public in a friendly non-law enforcement capacity. I try to by on foot or bike patrol whenever possible and try to make all my contacts, including law enforcement ones, positive. I am there to serve the public and protect the park. The goal of park law enforcement should not be the number of arrests made or citations issued but the reduction or absence of crime and using the minimum level of enforcement to achieve that. Yes, the public gets confused about what rangers do and that might not change, but it doesn't help when there is currently no standard for the job title of ranger and standards define the profession. The Legislation would go a long way in setting up a standard for our profession by standardizing our level of authority and would make our profession more professional.

A Book To Report On

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

What if we took eight park rangers and put them on a deserted island with eight park visitors. We then divided them into two tribes. The first tribe would be called the Parrang and the other tribe; we would call them the Nobrains. What tribe would have the final survivor? The question seems obvious, or is it?

Did anyone else get caught up in the Survivor hype? If you didn't get a chance to see it and you missed it again when CBS aired it against the Olympics, don't worry, I'm sure CBS will air it again during Christmas ratings.

I bet you are wondering what does this have to do with a book report? Well, after watching the Survivor series I begun to wonder if I had the skills to survive on my own with out any supplies, water, or food. As a park professional we are trained better then your average visitor and the visitor assumes we know everything about the out-of-doors, but do we know how to survive?

I bought a book titled *The SAS Survival Handbook How to survive in the wild, in any climate, on land or sea* by John "Lofty" Wiseman. It's a little bulky, but the cost is reasonable at \$24.00. This book shows you how to put together a survival kit, how to find water through condensation, distillation, and from plants and how to tell if a plant is edible. It also talks about how to build a shelter, a raft, and traps from natural materials. This book has so much information on how to survive, the members of both tribes would just declare me the winner and enjoy an adventurous vacation.

This is a good book to have around the office to read on your break, or when you have a slow day (OK, this is an excuse to have a slow day).

Johnny O

by John Havicon

This summer, I had the opportunity to do a little rock climbing at Castle Crags State Park. One day, as I was returning from the rocks, I was met by an old gentleman walking up the trail carrying a shovel. He introduced himself as Johnny O, the camp host. Since the camp was about three miles away, I wondered if he was lost. He explained that his trailer sits next to the Pacific Crest Trail, and he greets and host the hikers passing through. He also works on the trail and today he was working on erosion culverts. He told me he has been volunteering to do this for fourteen years. Being an old P.C.T'er myself, we struck up a conversation.

I was impressed not only by his fitness at being 80 years old but also his dedication to the park. You very rarely see someone give so much personal time without getting something back. We have volunteers in our park but not to the point that they dedicate the rest of their life doing it. When I talked more to Johnny O, I got the feeling that the parks staff had never acknowledged Johnny O's work and he was just there as a "camp host." That didn't seemed to bother him and he seemed happy just to be doing what he does. His reward came from talking with park visitors and teaching them about the environment.

My point in all this is how many of us take the time to thank our volunteers. I don't mean the big presentation in front of dignitaries, which are good and necessary also but a simple thank you and letting them know how important they are. If you have "Johnny O's" in your park, you don't know how lucky you are. Stop and say thanks.

PRAC on the Web

by Ken Miller

PRAC has two great resources available on the internet. The website address has been changed to:

<http://prac.ws>

The website has job information, *The Signpost*, schedule of upcoming events and workshops, PRAC merchandise, a newspage with letters addressed to the membership, lots of links, as well as the legendary "Ode to a Ranger." Check it out.

The latest PRAC item on the internet is the PRACMembers mailing list located at:

<http://www.egroups.com>

The list is a great way to keep abreast of current events and to chat with other PRAC members. Currently there are only 32 people subscribed so there is great room for growth. The list is provided for PRAC members and their friends.

To join go to: <http://www.egroups.com>; search for PRACMembers. The list is restricted and you need to join to subscribe to it.

Both of these PRAC resources are great and deserve a look.

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