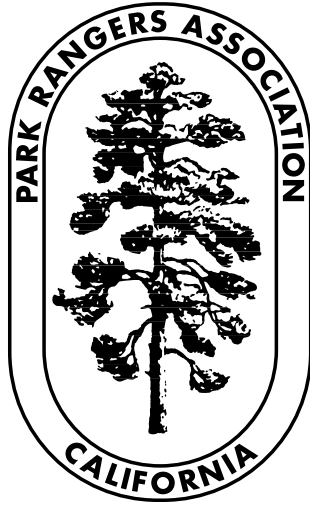


The Signpost

September - October, 2007



Ranger News & Updates by Matt Cerkel

The summer is passing by quickly; I hope you've all had a good summer, so far. In this month's article I'll get you updated on past stories, have some new stories and get you caught up with some ranger related info.

There are several updates to past stories. In July the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department budget request to expand its ranger program was approved. As of right now the additional rangers will be assigned to Golden Gate Park. Additionally, there has been a lot of recent local press about homelessness and its related problems in Golden Gate Park. One of the likely goals of the expanded ranger program is to improve patrol and security in Golden Gate Park and dealing with the homeless problem. One of the Directors of Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District informed me that they are in the elementary stages of getting established and master planning what resources can be brought onboard. I think it would be a great opportunity to help set up and plan for a new agency I wish Napa the best and offer any help PRAC can provide.

The last several months I have been busy with wildland fire training at my job as a Watershed Ranger with the Marin Municipal Water District. I provide monthly in-service fire training for MMWD and provide an interagency annual wildland refresher (an all day class) for MMWD and Marin County Open Space District. I find being a trainer to be an enjoyable experience. I always strive to improve my training and to make it more relevant to the trainees. While preparing the August training, I came across a recently released CAL FIRE (CDF) Fire Behavior Alert. I've included it in this issue of *the Signpost*; if you have wildland fire duties please take the time to read it. The Alert mentions the "Back to Basics" to mitigate safety concerns on wildland fires. The "Basics" are Anchor and Flank the fire: one foot in the black with valid safety zones and escape routes. I started using the "Back to Basics" approach in my wildland fire training earlier this year and found it's hard to go wrong by following them.

In other training news: in early October Region 1 will be hosting a Search and Rescue Management Course. Tentatively it will cover managing a hasty search, transitioning to a full search, interfacing with County SAR resources, the basics of working a County SAR team and basics of an extended search operation. The class will be between 4 and 8 hours, will be held on a weekday and will be limited to 15 people. The instructor(s) will be from the Marin County Sheriff's Office and/or its SAR Team.

Be part of a world wide event that affects everyone...Coastal Cleanup 2007. On September 15, join volunteers around the world cleaning creeks, rivers and beaches. For more information www.coast4u.org

From the President's Patrol Truck

The summer is finally winding down and boy has it been busy! It seems like there have been more visitors than usual, could be due to the high price of gas. There have also been more wildland fires due to the excessive dry weather. We have had our share in the County Parks. I did however get a chance to take a twelve day road trip up the coast into Oregon and Washington. We camped along the way at different State and National Parks. A friendly reminder for all of you who might be traveling in Washington State: obey the speed limit! They do give speeding tickets.

Speaking of speeding; the conference team is speeding along and on schedule with planning the 2008 California Parks conference. The theme is "Clean water, Clear Vision, Deep Purpose." The 2008 CPC will be the first week of April in South Lake Tahoe at the Embassy Suites Hotel. The Hotel is at state line on the California side, however, if you feel like gambling just walk across the street and you are in Nevada. The rooms are big enough to fit five or six people and if you are staying at the hotel you get an "all-you-can-eat" buffet style breakfast. If that's not enough to get you up to the conference, from 4:30 to 6:00 it is "all-you-can-drink" happy hour. If you would like to present a topic, donate an item for the silent auction, or if you know of a vendor that would like to attend, please contact Pam Helmke at region2@calranger.org.

The deadline for the Thomas Smith and the Bill Orr scholarships is September 30th. To be eligible, students must be members of PRAC, enrolled in a program of study in parks and recreation management, resource management, forestry or a related field and enrolled in 6.1 semester units or the equivalent. Last year no one applied for either of these scholarships.

It's that time of year when the nominations committee will be accepting nominations for the following Board member positions, Regions 2, 4 and President. To become a Board member all you need to do is be a regular PRAC member and employed in the parks field. Some of the benefits you receive as a region director are free membership, free conference registration, travel reimbursement and free admission to all PRAC trainings.

I'd like to let all of you know that I will not be running again for President. I have been on the Board for six years and I will do two more as past President. I think it's time to get some new people on the Board that have fresh eyes and fresh vision that will continue to take PRAC into the next adventure.

Until next time...

Lee

*** * Fire Behavior Alert * ***

The Potential For Extreme Fire Behavior Exists This Season For All Cal Fire Units And Contract Counties by Matt Cerkel

The large number of early season shelter deployments and other fire behavior related incidents warrant a review of the conditions that contribute to extreme fire behavior. All of California is experiencing prolonged, record breaking drought and critical fuels conditions. Situational awareness is more than a buzz word—assess the big picture—*Fuels-Weather-Topography*.

Situation factors to consider:

- Assess/scout the fire
- Always include SAFETY in your actions; making it your number one priority!
- Know the Weather
- Know Previous & Predicted Fire Behavior
- Have the Communications Plan & use it
- Look for & understand Local Factors relating to fire behavior

Concerns for Firefighters to Consider:

Live fuel moisture samples across the state, and especially in Southern California, have been the lowest sampled in history. Critical fuel moisture will be reached at least two months early in most areas. The heat sink properties that live fuel moisture usually provide will be absent this season. Assume live fuels are fully available to burn. Low live fuel moisture and heavier than normal dead fuel accumulations under stressed vegetation will cause explosive fire behavior.

Weather conditions were unusually dry this spring with historically low rainfall and mountain snow pack over the entire state. Soil moisture is exceedingly low and large dead fuels are fully cured. Fuel beds will support rapid ignition, heavy spotting, & high intensity fire spread.

Energy Release Component (ERC) values are above the 90th percentile in all areas, and above the 97th percentile in the most critical areas of the state. The 97th percentile indicates that only 3% of observations have ever been recorded above that level; in other words, the ERC values currently being recorded in most areas of the state are at historical highs. Remember, the ERC calculation is dominated by fuels and does not

consider wind or topography and typically trends better than other NFDRS Indices.

Topography plays a significant role in fire intensity through slope, aspect, and channeling. Watch for the daily changes in sun exposure over the various aspects and consider topographic channeling or alignment when evaluating your position.

Mitigations:

Gather intelligence and remember the fundamentals—emphasize and implement LCES prior to engagement!

Develop situational awareness of the critical conditions described above. Use your experience or ask the locals what situations cause the greatest difficulty. How's it burning? If your gut makes you anxious, there is probably a good reason! Re-evaluate your situation and act accordingly. Clear and concise communication must be maintained.

Evaluate conditions continuously. Monitor fire weather conditions throughout your commitment. Pay attention to how internal and external distractions affect your risk-decisions. Focus on the Big Picture, not the narrow view immediately in front of you.

You are empowered to make risk-decisions based on current and expected conditions and your evaluation of probability of success. When considering structure protection, ask yourself, “Is the structure defensible and would you be there if the structure was not?” Do not attempt a frontal assault on a fast moving fire. Existing conditions warrant a “back to the basics” approach to safely mitigate incidents; anchor and flank, one foot in the black, valid safety zones and escape routes. Once you figure all these things out, communicate them to all concerned and make sure someone is acting as a knowledgeable and capable lookout. **Do Not Over Commit!**

The First Priority For All Decisions Is Firefighter Survival

The Whole Park System

by Park Ranger Sara Girard

As rangers, we are all part of a larger park system than just the facility where we are currently working. I encourage you to try and visit all the parks, beaches and historical sites that comprise your department. A ranger who only knows his/her assigned site is like an assembly line worker who screws a bolt into a part but has not idea what the finished product looks like.

We best serve the visitors of a region by considering ourselves part of the whole. Oftentimes parks in your system are only a short drive away but offer completely different recreational opportunities. Our purpose is to present the whole picture to our outdoor patrons.

I don't mean to brag but I personally visited all the urban parks, wilderness parks, historical sites, and beaches in my park system.....all during my first year of employment on my days off. Now,

16 years later, I still go hiking on a regular basis at my system's different wilderness parks.

Sadly, I heard of a recent case in a park system where a ranger was promoted to a supervising manager position overseeing a district with a just handful of parks but that person had never even set foot in some of them. That is a situation that really should not happen.

Practical knowledge of each of the parks in your department provides the public with a face-to-face credible source of information. Your visitors appreciate it when you can provide first-hand information about the amenities of a different park in your system that they have never visited. After people spend a day enjoying your park, you should be able to refer them with confidence to another facility in your system that would also suit their recreational needs. This can only be done if you know your whole park system.

“Sierra Autumn” Fall Photo Exhibit

We want to see your best fall photos at Bartley Ranch this October!

Bartley Ranch Regional Park, a Washoe County Regional Park located in Reno, Nevada, will be presenting a photographic exhibit within the Western Heritage Interpretive Center, October 1st through October 31st 2007. The “Sierra Autumn” exhibit photos displayed will reflect autumnal images in and around the Sierra Nevada.

The exhibit, in its twelfth year, is free to the public, and we anticipate several thousand to attend. We are looking for photographers to enter two framed, wired, and ready-to-hang photos that best represent their views of “Sierra Autumn”. There is no fee for submitting your work. There will be a “People’s Choice Award,” as voted by visitors to the exhibit, and an “Artist’s Choice Award,” as voted by participating artists.

If you are interested in participating in the exhibit please contact Park Ranger Marie D. Fong at (775) 828-6612, mfong@washoecounty.us or write to Bartley Ranch Regional Park 6000 Bartley Ranch Road Reno, NV 89511.

Marie D. Fong

The Public Nuisance & Other Useful Information

by Pam Helmke

I recently stumbled upon a free and very informative web site provided by our friends at the San Diego County Sheriff's Office. One of their Deputy District Attorneys, Robert Phillips, produces a timely Legal Update that is available to anyone who wishes to log in. Deputy DA Phillips not only provides an overview of new case law but offers candid opinions into the court process.

The site provides information similar to the California Attorney Generals Legal Source Book, but no subscription is required.

After finding the site I spent some time browsing and found many cases that would be applicable to park law enforcement. There are a number of excellent cases on search and seizure and perhaps my favorite—Urinating in Public as a Public Nuisance.

As an urban park ranger dealing with a large homeless population I found this review to be very useful and it gave me a new tool for dealing with repeat offenders.

Deputy DA Phillips also allows reprints of his work for professional organizations looking to share this information. I've included this case as a sample for your review.

Urinating in Public as a Public Nuisance:

People v. McDonald (Mar. 8, 2006) 137 Cal.App.4th 521

Rule: Urinating in public is a public nuisance, per P.C. 370/372, and may be charged as a criminal offense.

Facts: Oakland Police Officer Francisco Rojas observed defendant urinating in the parking lot of a closed restaurant in Berkeley, at 11:23 a.m. on a Sunday morning. Intending to cite defendant for littering, per P.C. 374.4(b), the officer stopped and detained defendant. When defendant was unable to produce any identification the officer physically arrested him. A search of his person incident to arrest resulted in the recovery of six off-white rocks which were found to contain cocaine base. Charged in state court with possession of cocaine base, defendant filed a motion to suppress this evidence at his preliminary examination, arguing that his initial detention was illegal in that there is no statutory offense of urinating in public. The prosecutor argued that although the officer used the wrong subdivision, there was probable cause to arrest defendant for littering pursuant to P.C. 374.4, subdivisions (a) and (c). It was also suggested that defendant's offense might be better described as a public nuisance, pursuant to P.C. 370 and 372, or maybe the release of injurious or nauseous substances in a place of public

assembly, as described in P.C. 375(a). Finding that urine was included within the legal description of "waste matter," per P.C. 374(b), the magistrate held that littering waste matter, per P.C. 374.4, applied. Defendant was bound over for trial. He then raised the issue again before the trial court in a motion to dismiss, per P.C. 995. After considering all the above options, the trial court agreed that P.C. 374.4 applied and denied the motion.

Defendant appealed from his subsequent conviction for this offense.

Held: The Fifth District Court of Appeal (Div. 2) affirmed. However, the Court agreed with defendant's argument that section 374.4 did not apply to urinating. This is because 374.4 contains its own definitions of "litter" and "waste matter," as described in 374.4, subdivision (c). Subdivision (c) is limited, by its terms, to items "carried on or about the person." Urine is not something that is "carried on or about the person." It is carried "within the person." Therefore, using the definition of "waste matter" as contained in P.C. 374(b) to find a violation of the littering provisions of P.C. 374.4 was error. The Court also rejected the People's argument that P.C. 375, dealing with the release of injurious or nauseous substances, applied. This section is interpreted to be limited to artificially created substances through some process of fabrication. Urine, of course, is a natural byproduct of the human body, and not artificially created. However, the Court found that P.C. 370, making it a misdemeanor (per P.C. 372) to commit a "public nuisance," does apply. Section 370 defines, in pertinent part, a public nuisance to include; "Anything which is injurious to health, or is indecent, or offensive to the senses,so as to interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property by an entire community or neighborhood, or by any considerable number of person,...." Urinating in public is in fact injurious to health, indecent, and offensive to the senses. It interferes with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property by a considerable number of people, at least when done in a populated area near a busy street. As such, P.C. 370/372 applies.

Note: Whether or not urinating or defecating in public is a criminal offense has been an issue for some time. Your jurisdiction may have a city or county ordinance covering these acts, which you may also use. If not, P.C. 370 (a misdemeanor per 372) may now be charged. Now I have to go wash my hands.

For those of you who may find legal updates useful this web page is at: <http://www.sdsheriff.net/legalupdates/>

Deputy DA Phillips is also kind enough to provide his contact information and seems to be very prompt at answering his e-mails too.

The United States Forest Service & Back to Natives RESTORATION

Presents a...

VOLUNTEER RESTORATION TRAINING PROGRAM

9 Saturdays in 2007 & 2008, 8AM - 12PM

Back to Natives Restoration, in a cooperative agreement with the Cleveland National Forest, will provide hands on training for restoration volunteers over the course of a 9 month training program. Each training session will focus on specific aspects of the restoration process from rudimentary tool identification and tool and trail safety training, to native and non native plant identification, proper site entry/exit protocol as well as mechanical/physical abatement techniques to reduce soil disturbance and possible weed seed germination.

When: September 15, October 27, November 10, December 8, January 12, March 8, April 12, May 10, & June 14

Where: Cleveland National Forest and other locations TBA within Orange County.

Who's invited: Anyone interested in hiking Orange County trails to identify invasive plants, remove them when possible, and report them when assistance is needed. Volunteers from all wildland agencies, organizations and non-profits are also welcome to participate, then share the knowledge and skills gained to restore their own lands. Age requirement: 16 years and older. Individuals younger than 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

What to Bring: Gloves, sunscreen, water, snacks, hat, wear layers and closed toe shoes.

Why: Ecological restoration is a means of sustaining the diversity of life on Earth and reestablishing healthy ecosystems. This program is for those interested in the restoration and conservation of Orange County wildlands. Successful habitat restoration ensures that native species are protected while non-native species are removed efficiently, and with minimal human impact to the site. This program will acquaint participants with non-chemical, low impact weed removal methods.

RSVP: Please RSVP by September 14 to 949-509-4787 or restoration@backtonatives.org



Back to Natives RESTORATION
Saving Habitat One Person at a Time®
www.backtonatives.org



Region 5 BBQ and The Thin Green Line Movie Premiere

by Sara Girard

Chino Hills State Park was the site for the 2007 PRAC Region 5 BBQ. The seventeen attendees included nine PRAC Region 5 locals along with four guests, three Region 4 members, and our wonderful host, Chino Hills State Park Ranger Bart Grant. This ranger group was a predominantly carnivorous bunch as all the barbecued bratwursts with sauerkraut were devoured quickly. Meanwhile, the vegetarian rangers grazed on the grilled veggie burgers. For dessert, homemade chocolate ice cream was a welcome treat in the setting summer sun. A good time was had by all.

As the vesper-tine hours arrived, the group gathered at the newly remodeled outdoor amphitheater. Hot buttered popcorn and cold drinks were served as the rangers settled into their seats. PRAC Region 5 Director, Park Ranger Sara Girard, gave a heartfelt introduction to the international ranger documentary DVD movie premiere of *The Thin Green Line*. This inspirational documentary was filmed by an Australian ranger who traveled across the globe for a year

to interview park rangers. It was enlightening to see the dedication of our peers from different continents. The movie showed rangers working in African jungles trying to stop armed poachers. There was a scene of a Canadian ranger who was



part of a helicopter rescue team that airlifted an injured hiker. A Uruguayan ranger, working without any other staff, was filmed walking knee deep in a marsh to replant native grasses. One of the overall themes of the film is that park rangers are born, not made. Comments from the audience during and after the movie addressed the valor of rangers around the world. The harsh conditions and undying love they have for conserving and preserving the environment were a renewal of the reason most of us became rangers. To purchase a copy of *The Thin Green Line* for your department, visit the website: www.thingreenline.info Please note that 100% of the profits from the DVD sales is used to support rangers on the front-line.



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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____		
ADDRESS _____		
CITY _____	STATE _____	ZIP _____
PHONE _____		
HOME _____	WORK _____	
Email Address _____		
Employer or School _____		
Job Classification or Major _____		

Voting Membership

REGULAR.....\$50 _____
RETIRED.....\$35 _____

Non-voting Membership

AGENCY:
(1-25 PERSONS-6 MAILINGS)..... \$100 _____
25 PERSONS-12 MAILINGS)..... \$150 _____
STUDENT.....\$20 _____
ASSOCIATE.....\$35 _____
SUPPORTING..... \$100 _____

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