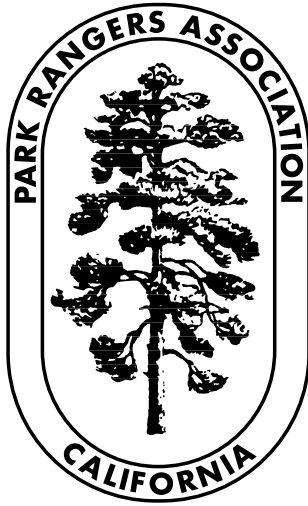


The Signpost

January - February, 2009



Use This Time Wisely

by Sarah Girard

The fall and winter months bring change. Some people think the colder seasons are a slower time in the parks. I see it as being just as busy; it's a matter of where we channel our energy that changes. Our job duties require us to wear many different hats, and our hats can change along with the seasons. For park rangers, this change means shifting priorities from enforcement to maintenance and training.

Preparation for fall and winter comes with the abrupt change in the weather and decreased amount of available daylight. Clearing storm drains, beefing up diversion channels on trails and winterizing vehicles become a priority on your to-do list in anticipation of the approaching cold and rainy weather. Even in Southern California, parks nestled in deep canyons can feel the effects of freezing temperatures. Creeks and streams can change from educational riparian habits to raging torrents that endanger the lives of ourselves and the public. We must be prepared.

The fall and winter rains present adverse weather conditions that provide chances for valuable hands-on learning experiences in the field. We can take advantage of inclement weather because it gives us excellent training opportunities for trail maintenance, tactical driving skills and beach erosion techniques. These seasonal situations allow all of us to perfect recently learned skills or teach these skills to new or transferred employees.

Now is the time to check your disaster supplies, clean storage areas and reorganize what you put off while you were too busy enforcing park regulations. Schedule trainings with your crew that the warmer seasons would not allow. Come on, get a move on. Summer is just around the corner.

California Parks Conference 2009

March 9-12 in Cambria, California

at the Cambria Pines Lodge

Room rate of \$92 includes breakfast (plus tax). Cambria Pines Lodge is taking reservations for the 2009 conference.

To make your reservations please call 800-966-6490. Remember to mention "*The California Park Conference*." Reserve your room before February 1st to guarantee the special room rate.

Conference Highlights

- Keynote by SLO Co Park Manager Pete Jenny
- Tour and Dinner at Hearst Castle
- Wine Tasting
- Tours of Elephant Seal Breeding Area
- Tour of Oceano Dunes
- Great Accommodations at Cambria Pines Lodge
- DPR Director Ruth Coleman will address the group
- Valuable Training Sessions, some with POST hours
- Silent Auction
- Thursday night Banquet

Mexican Marijuana Cartels Sully US Forests, Parks

by Tracie Cone, Associated Press Writer
Saturday October 11, 2008

PORTERVILLE, Calif.—National forests and parks—long popular with Mexican marijuana-growing cartels—have become home to some of the most polluted pockets of wilderness in America because of the toxic chemicals needed to eke lucrative harvests from rocky mountainsides, federal officials said.

The grow sites have taken hold from the West Coast's Cascade Mountains, as well as on federal lands in Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia.

Seven hundred grow sites were discovered on U.S. Forest Service land in California alone in 2007 and 2008—and authorities say the 1,800-square-mile Sequoia National Forest is the hardest hit.

Weed and bug sprays, some long banned in the U.S., have been smuggled to the marijuana farms. Plant growth hormones have been dumped into streams, and the water has then been diverted for miles in PVC pipes.

Rat poison has been sprinkled over the landscape to keep animals away from tender plants. And many sites are strewn with the carcasses of deer and bears poached by workers during the five-month growing season that is now ending.

“What’s going on on public lands is a crisis at every level,” said Forest Service agent Ron Pugh. “These are America’s most precious resources, and they are being devastated by an unprecedented commercial enterprise conducted by armed foreign nationals. It is a huge mess.”

The first documented marijuana cartels were discovered in Sequoia National Park in 1998. Then, officials say, tighter border controls after Sept. 11, 2001, forced industrial-scale growers to move their operations into the United States.

Millions of dollars are spent every year to find and uproot marijuana-growing operations on state and federal lands, but federal officials say no money is budgeted to clean up the environmental mess left behind after helicopters carry off the plants. They are encouraged that Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who last year secured funding for eradication, has inquired about the pollution problems.

In the meantime, the only cleanup is done by volunteers. On Tuesday, the nonprofit High Sierra Trail Crew, founded to improve access to public lands, plans to take 30 people deep into the Sequoia National Forest to carry out miles of drip irrigation pipe, tons of human garbage, volatile propane canisters, and bags and bottles of herbicides and pesticides.

“If the people of California knew what was going on out there, they’d be up in arms about this,” said Shane Krogen, the nonprofit’s executive director. “Helicopters full of dope are like body counts in the Vietnam War. What does it really mean?”

Last year, law enforcement agents uprooted nearly five million plants in California, nearly a half million in Kentucky and 276,000 in Washington state as the development of hybrid plants has expanded the range of climates marijuana can tolerate.

“People light up a joint, and they have no idea the amount of environmental damage associated with it,” said Cicely Muldoon, deputy regional director of the Pacific West Region of the National Park Service.

As of Sept. 2, more than 2.2 million plants had been uprooted statewide. The largest single bust in the nation this year netted 482,000 plants in the remote Sierra of Tulare County, the forest service said.

Some popular parks also have suffered damage. In 2007, rangers found more than 20,000 plants in Yosemite National Park and 43,000 plants in Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park, where 159 grow sites have been discovered over the past 10 years.

Agent Patrick Foy of the California Department of Fish and Game estimated that 1.5 pounds of fertilizers and pesticides is used for every 11.5 plants.

“I’ve seen the pesticide residue on the plants,” Foy said. “You ain’t just smoking pot, bud. You’re smoking some heavy-duty pesticides from Mexico.”

Scott Wanek, the western regional chief ranger for the National Park Service, said he believes the eradication efforts have touched only a small portion of the marijuana farms and that the environmental impact is much greater than anyone knows.

“Think about Sequoia,” Wanek said. “The impact goes well beyond the acreage planted. They create huge networks of trail systems, and the chemicals that get into watersheds are potentially very far-reaching — all the way to drinking water for the downstream communities. We are trying to study that now.”

For a much more in-depth and personal approach to this problem and its effects on parks and open spaces, members should attend Park Ranger Jenny Donahue’s Drug Education Session at the California State Parks Conference. ~ Marie D. Fong

Ranger News and Updates

by Matt Cerkel

Since my last article, I would like to update everyone on the City of Oakland Ranger program. The City of Oakland and the Oakland Police Department was proposing to layoff three rangers, eliminate five empty ranger positions, and “patrol” the parks with police officers. On October 16th, I had an opportunity to speak in support of the Oakland Park Rangers at a special Oakland City Council meeting. The following week the Oakland City Council voted to “restore” three Oakland Park Rangers, and eliminated five vacancies. Barhin Bhatt, Vice President of the Oakland Park Rangers Association, stated, “The Oakland Park Rangers Association has mixed feelings about this development at this time. While we are thankful to have jobs, and will be able to continue to serve the citizens and the parks of Oakland, we are now crippled by a lack of staffing. Prior to this cut, we were able to be marginally effective by back filling our vacancies with overtime. The three Rangers will now only be able to work 15 eight-hour shifts a week, compared to the 40 eight hour shifts we have been doing. Unfortunately, this means our parks will not be adequately patrolled and public safety will suffer.” Sadly, this problem may be repeated across the state with the budget crisis at the State level and the likely cuts that many local governments face. From what I have heard, the City of Long Beach Rangers, City of Los Angeles Recreation, and Parks Departments may be facing similar reductions.

Sadly, the budget crisis is not the only threat our profession is dealing with. In Phoenix, AZ, the city park rangers are dealing with two shortsighted, unsupportive City Departments, their own Parks Department, and the City Police Department. With increased criminal activity in the City Parks and a concern for officer safety, park ranger supervisors requested the police to determine whether rangers need more training and tools to do their jobs. The police responded to the request and stated that rangers should be stripped of the authority they have been given and have most of their safety equipment removed (handcuffs

and batons). They have barred them from using the police database to see if the person they are citing has a warrant. Rangers are no longer allowed to detain persons violating laws in the parks, either for arrest by police, or to receive a citation written by the rangers. This is despite the fact that this year alone, rangers have detained more than 70 people with arrest warrants in Phoenix parks until police could pick them up. Under the new rules, rangers are told that they will no longer have access to information to confirm identities or to know if the person has a warrant. They can no longer detain persons in our parks. They may write a citation, but if the person walks away they are told to just let them go and void the ticket. If the rangers see something happen now they are required to call the police and let the illegal activity happen until the police arrive 30 or more minutes later. Many Phoenix park users feel the City’s actions have reduced the effectiveness of the rangers and have left the parks in a very vulnerable position. They feel crimes in the park will increase without the rangers having the proper authority, especially when the Phoenix police department does not even respond to calls in the Parks when they are busy with other calls for service.

History keeps repeating itself when it comes to budget and authority issues for ranger programs. We as a profession need to come up with strategies to deal with these reoccurring issues. Two strategies that need to be addressed in California are a standardized definition of what a Park Ranger is and a statewide standard level of training for all Rangers. As I’ve said before the PRAC Generalist Park Ranger Standards and Training guidelines is a great start, but it only a beginning. To truly be recognized as a profession by the public and politicians a statewide standard for Park Rangers is long overdue. It will also assist us in getting our profession viewed as a vital government service on par with police, fire, and EMS agencies, and reduce the likelihood of budget cuts and authority reductions that so often face park ranger programs.



How to Survive the Media Tips

by Marie D. Fong

Last year Region 6 hosted a “How to Survive the Media Workshop”, presented by Washoe County Department of Regional Parks and Open Space’s Public Information Officer Bob Harmon; this training was developed to be a hands on course to prepare for the toughest media interviews while keeping knees from knocking and teeth from chattering, or in my case to keep from rocking back and forth with the fervor of a meth addict while promoting children’s programming—live.

Being able to represent yourself and your agency at a moment notice is nothing new for Park Professionals, but doing this in front of a live microphone and/or camera seems to be the hardest venue, even for seasoned professionals. With the current looming budget crisis, smaller media budgets to promote programs and events from within individual agencies, and the quickly changing media presence, it seems that Park Rangers are appearing more frequently in a variety of media mediums: print, television news, electronic news, public service announcements, and more. With the media being a tool by which we can inform large collections of citizens during times of crisis, increase a communities awareness of our programs and services, attract new residents and business while garnering their support, convey a proactive image of the profession and the agency represented, and provide a better understanding of an agencies policies, views and activities, it is important to know who best to work within the media structure before you are called on.

For those of you who speak to the media, especially on behalf of your department or agency, try these practical tips that you can use in any scenario from personal interviews to communicating during a crisis.

General Interview Tips

- Be patient, friendly, and consistent.
- Don’t be defensive or use jargon.
- Never lose your temper, speculate, or say “no comment”.
- Don’t answer statements. Only respond to questions.
- Have a max of 3 messages or points in mind before the interview and return to those frequently to convey the message. Answer the question and then transition back to your key points.
- Be brief if you want to be quoted. Be lengthy if not.
- Don’t feel rushed to answer, give yourself time to answer or ask the question to be rephrased to give you more think time.
- Correct a reporter’s misstatements, but do so gently.
- When asked if there is any thing else you would like to add, return to your key messages).

Print Media Interview Tips

- Since these interviews are usually conducted over the phone and print reporters average day starts at 9am and have 5pm deadlines, with stories committed by 3pm, return these reporters phone calls in a timely manner.
- Inquire about the subject matter before the interview and ask the reported who they have already spoken to and what material they have been presented with regarding the topic, i.e. agency press releases, fliers, etc... If you haven’t seen the material they are referring to ask them to send you a copy so you have time to review and research as needed. Likewise if you have matters that would help the reporter, collect data on the topic, offer to fax them the information you or your PIO have readily available.
- If you need time to research ask to reschedule.
- Be familiar with their deadline and work to stick to that schedule.
- Provide additional names and telephone numbers for reporters to follow up and let those individuals know they might receive a follow up call.
- If you want to be accurately quoted, speak slowly and concisely. Reporters are usually typing as you speak. Give them time when you are finish, so they might finish typing or taking notes.
- Provide corrects spelling of names, titles and agencies... Then confirm.
- When explaining a complicated matter to a reporter, it is acceptable to ask them to summarize the information they have received from you. This gives you the opportunity to clarify any points.
- Develop a relationship with the reporter, and become their expert in your field of expertise.

Television and Radio Interview Tips

- Story assignments are made at the station’s am meeting and reporters begin setting up interviews. Story commitments are usually made by 12 Noon. Reporters must be back at the studio by approximately 3:30PM to make the 5PM newscast.
- Don’t underestimate the time it takes to do an on-camera interview. A 30 second sound bite may require a 20 minute interview.
- Provide the reporter a business card and offer help if needed with pronunciations.
- The rule is new do an interview in sunglasses or a hat, but Park Professional break these rules regularly due

(Story continues on page 5.)

How to Survive the Media Tips

(Story continues from page 5.)

to environment or uniform requirement, but they might ask, so don't be surprised.

- Pick the setting and try to select a background that reflects your work. Provide a prop if appropriate.
- Pre-interview the reporter. Is this live or taped? What material are they interested in? Who have they spoken with thus far? Is this a local angle on a national story? What is that story?
- Don't overload a RV reporter with paper. Any documents should have key information highlighted.
- Respond to the reporter, not the camera.
- Speak in complete sentences.
- If taped, repeat the question in your answer. This often becomes a sound bite.
- If you make a mistake, finish the sentence (or cough) then restate correctly.
- When the reporter has finished, stay still, the camera operator will usually want a "2 shot."
- Always introduce yourself to both the reporter and the camera operator before the interview and thank them both after the interview.
- Exaggerate your expressions and voice for TV, this way you have a personality.
- Watch your body language.

The Dread Hostile Interview Tips

- If it is your duty to handle hostile interviews you should have proper training/coaching. These tips should help if you are caught unaware in a hostile interview. Remember that your answers reflect on your current and future status. The best approach is to use highly calculated answers. Take your time to develop each answer.
- Keep a positive outlook, optimism sells everywhere.
- Try to touch people's lives, identifying the human element.
- Seek cooperation from the media and make them feel like a part of the overall recovery.
- Talk about the public needs.
- Relate to individuals or specific groups in the community and how your program positively affects them.
- Be brief, especially during a hostile interview. Short statements will simplify the problem and solution in the mind of the media and the public.
- Be accurate and complete.

- Never use humor or ridicule.
- Tell only your story and do not address the opponent's issue.

Remember to Bridge...

Before the interview, finalize three major issues or points and stick to them throughout any of the above interviews. Use them often and early! Answer a reporter's question, then bridge into your own positive messages, benefit statements and examples. Know how much you can say about particular questions and don't let reporters get you to say more.

Bridging Example 1

Reporter: "Don't you think by tearing up Sun Valley Blvd. some stores will go out of business?"

You: Don't accept their words. Come up with your own. "The work on Sun Valley Blvd. will have long term benefits and eventually allow a greater number of people to drive to the area."

Bridging Example 2

Reporter: "Your swim registration program had people waiting in line for several hours. Is this the best the county can do?"

You: "While there were some long lines, you need to consider this was our busiest registration ever, with participation going up more than 10 percent. That says something about the popularity of our programs."

A few more bridges you can use

But...

There is only one way to look at it...

The real issue is...

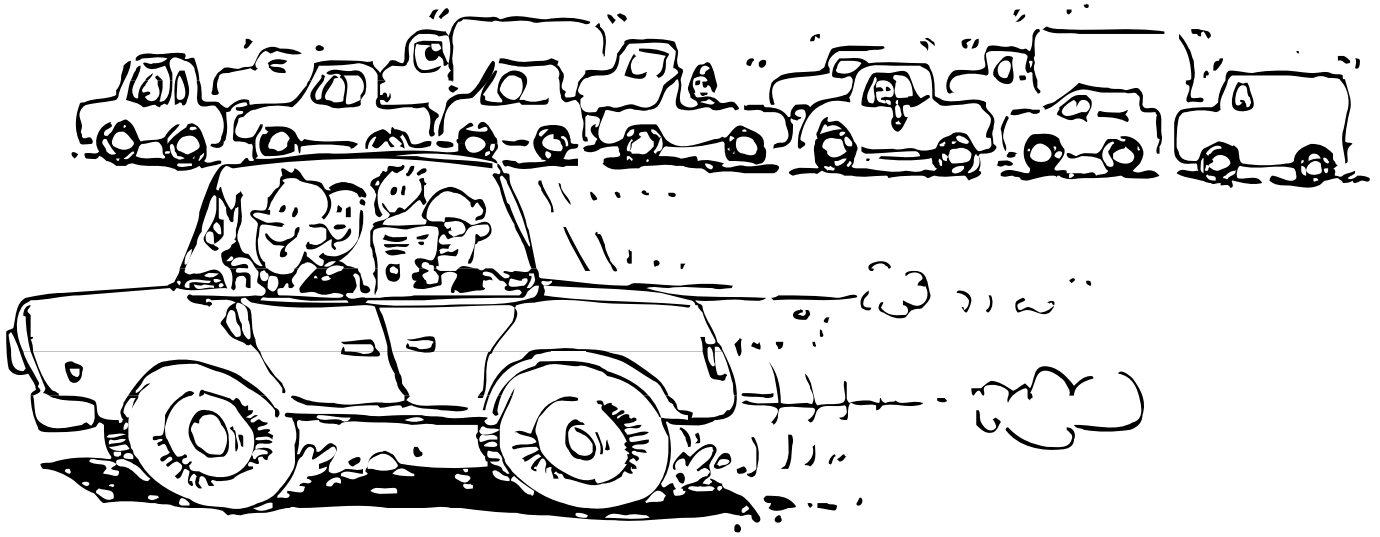
Here is something equally important to consider...

Let me put that in perspective...

Let's look at the history of the issue...

However, our research shows...

Remember that you will make media mistakes, but being well prepared and proactive regardless of the media setting will minimize the really dreadful errors. Having had many opportunities to improve, I have found these tips highly useful and this is coming from a Ranger who will live in infamy for a print article with the headline "Park Ranger Loves Outdoors", complete with photo. Thank you again to Bob Harmon, Public Information Officer for Washoe County's Department of Regional Parks and Open Space, and to all the PIO's out there who help us look good in the eye of the media, sometimes despite our own tendencies.



Special Precautions for Law Enforcement Officers during the Holiday Season

To help prevent these tragedies and reduce officer injuries and deaths this holiday season, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) is reminding all motorists to do their part by following some common-sense traffic safety measures.

A review of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) records shows that the Christmas and New Year's holiday season can be one of the most dangerous times of the year for law enforcement. Just consider that, throughout history, the chances of an officer being killed on New Year's Eve is 30 percent higher (65 total deaths) than the average day (50 total deaths), and on Christmas the number of line of duty deaths is 56 percent higher (78 total deaths) than normal.

"Each year, thousands of law enforcement officers sacrifice time with their own families so the rest of us can travel safely and efficiently to spend the holidays with our loved ones. We owe these brave and heroic protectors our full attention and consideration whenever we get behind the wheel," said Craig W. Floyd, the Memorial Fund's chairman and CEO.

"In addition to doing the obvious things — not speeding or driving drunk — all motorists need to be especially mindful of law enforcement officers who will be out in force on our roadways this month. If you see a police cruiser stopped by the side of the road, please slow down, move over and allow the officers to do their jobs safely and effectively," Mr. Floyd added.

The Memorial Fund's "Drive Safely" campaign outlines a number of steps motorists can take to protect law enforcement officers, other drivers and themselves:

Focus on driving. Avoid talking on your cell phone, eating, or hunting for items in your vehicle while driving. When traveling 55 mph or faster, a two-second distraction can be deadly. Adjust your speed for road conditions, including snow and ice.

Safely get out of the way of emergency vehicles. If an emergency vehicle has its lights or siren activated, slow down, move to the right and stop if possible. Once the vehicle passes, do not follow it too closely.

Move over. When you see an emergency vehicle stopped by the side of the road, slow down and safely move over one lane if possible. Forty-three states have "move over" laws, and violators can be ticketed and fined.

Stay off the shoulder. Driving on the shoulder of a roadway is not only illegal—it's dangerous. Emergency vehicles use the shoulder to get to crashes faster, where a few seconds can mean the difference between life and death.

"The good news is that Americans seem to be heeding the call for increased attention and safety on our roadways," said Mr. Floyd. Overall traffic fatalities in the U.S. are down 10 percent this year, and NLEOMF records show that traffic-related fatalities of officers are down 14 percent.

Let's hope these positive trends continue this holiday season and throughout the new year.

On behalf of the entire PRAC Board, have Happy Holidays and please stay SAFE!

Dave Updike

An Addition To The Program Library: Eagle Scout Taylor Abney

Marie D. Fong

As mentioned in the last newsletter, PRAC is currently creating a program library that will be available to all members to access via the website. In that ongoing effort to better serve our members and provide valuable resources, we are currently in the process of gathering these programs from our members and other interpreters willing to share their greatest tips and hints.

As we gather programs, we are now able to offer to each Region a wonderful interpretive tool created and donated by Eagle Scout Taylor Abney of Troop 35 in Reno, Nevada. Taylor was interested in completing an Eagle Scout Project that would have a lasting impact on the natural environment of the west coast while also helping the communities in this region understand the value and importance associated with protecting sensitive nesting and roosting habitats. Having met with Taylor it was decided his artistic talents would serve well as he earned his Eagle Scout award. Taylor Abney has created six sets of one dozen eggs, one set to be available to each PRAC Region. Each set contains twelve replica eggs similar to those that can be purchase through interpretive catalogs for use in museum displays, interpretive programming, field exercises, and more. The use of these replicas enables interpreters to create any series of bird related programming around the samples without collecting or harvesting fragile, limited resources, and without having to purchase these items which are rather expensive.

The sets will have a replica representing the following species:

- Golden Eagle
- Mallard Duck
- House Finch
- Scrub Jay
- Kestrel
- Killdeer
- Meadowlark
- Wild Turkey
- House Wren
- Great Blue Heron
- Red Shafted Flicker
- American Red Breasted Robin

Again I would like thank Eagle Scout Taylor Abney for his generous donation of time, talent, and resources that he has provided to the entire PRAC membership and in turn their agencies and those they serve through environmental education.

We are still looking for programs of all styles, long and short, hikes and slideshows, ages 0-whatever. If you are interested in adding your program to the library, please e-mail, fax, mail, or call Marie D. Fong or Brian Christensen at region6@calranger.org or region2@calranger.org.

Nature Quote

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

Aldo Leopold,

American ecologist, forester, and environmentalist

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Non-voting Membership

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STUDENT.....\$20 _____
ASSOCIATE.....\$35 _____
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