



## 2018 California Parks Training and Conference Coming March 4<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at Tenaya Lodge, Fish Camp, CA

The Park Rangers Association of California's 2018 California Parks Training and Conference will be at the Tenaya Lodge, just outside the south entrance to Yosemite National Park. The conference will be held March 4 through March 8. March 4<sup>th</sup> is the first date the discounted room rate is available. March 5 registration/check-in will open, there will be field trips, and there will be a special training session. March 6 and 7 will be the training sessions and special speakers. March 7 will also see our general membership meeting and our awards banquet.

Look for registration and formal schedule soon!

Our conference keynote speaker will be Frank Dean, president of the Yosemite Conservancy and former superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

We will also have many great sessions in our Public Safety, Interpretation, Park Operations/Resource Management Tracks.

### **In our public safety track sessions will include:**

- Documenting and Report Writing for Use of Force Incidents by POST Certified DT Instructor/MMWD Park Ranger Brett Pedisich
- The Use of Game Cameras for Park Law Enforcement by MMWD Park Ranger Matt Cerkel
- F&G inspection/enforcement/statutes by CDFW wardens
- CDFW Marijuana Eradication Team/Trespass-DTO Grow Officer Safety by CDFW Lt. John Nores

# 2018 California Parks Training and Conference

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- Establishing a Peace Officer Park Ranger Program by Carol Belser, CMWD Park Services Manager
- Wildland Fire Evacuations by Deputy Matt Larson, Marin County Sheriff's Office
- Yosemite Search and Search by National Park Ranger John Dill

## In our interpretation track sessions will include:

- Honoring the Oral Tradition by Ane Carla Rovetta
- From Earth to Art: Natural Pigments and Paints by Ane Carla Rovetta
- How to Answer Questions When You Have No Time to Prepare by Ethan Rotman
- Creating a Native Garden – On a budget and with NO budget! By LARPD Park Ranger Amy Wolitzer

## In our park operations/resource management sessions will include:

- Strategies for Using Social Media for Park Management by MCP Open Space Park Ranger Mike Warner
- GIS / Mapping for Field Staff by MCP Open Space Park Ranger Mike Warner
- Best management practices of our parks
- A presentation on California Wildlife
- West Valley College's Park Management Program by Chris Cruz

We will also have a number of speakers from Yosemite National Park! Including Scott Gediman, Deputy Superintendent, Public Affairs-who will discuss how to handle high profile events and media events.

**If you are interested in presenting at the conference or have ideas for the conference, please contact:**

Dawn Soles, Interp Track Chair  
[dsoles@larpd.org](mailto:dsoles@larpd.org)

Ken Wong, Public Safety Track Chair  
[Kwong@ebparks.org](mailto:Kwong@ebparks.org)

Michael Warner, Park Ops/Resource Management Track chair  
[region1@calranger.org](mailto:region1@calranger.org)

Matt Cerkel, conference chair  
[matt@cal-ranger.org](mailto:matt@cal-ranger.org)

**For reservations follow the link or call the 800 numbers**

[Ctrl + click Here to Make an Online Reservation](#)

Guests unable to use our online reservation system can make their reservation by calling (800) 635-5807, Option #1 and identify they are with the PRAC 2018 Conference, or using the group code 3199G4 to receive the group rate.

# Under the Flat Hat

## by Matt Cerkel

Since January 1, 1990, the State of California by law has defined and restricted the use of the “Ranger,” “Park Ranger” or “Forest Ranger” job title to employees of the State Parks, Cal Fire, or peace officers under Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 830) of Title 3 of Part 2 of the Penal Code. The law grandfathered local agencies using the variations of “Ranger” job titles for non-sworn personnel prior to 1990 and also allows federal agencies to use the “Ranger” job title. See Public Resources Code Section 4022 for the full verbiage. The point is that for nearly 28 years any new park ranger program established by a local agency in the state is legally required to appoint their rangers or park rangers to be sworn peace officers under Penal Code Sections 830.31(b), 830.34(d) or 830.6(a). Any new park ranger programs established in California must meet the legal requirements set forth by the Public Resources Code, the Penal Code, the agency’s enabling act (which will be found in various state codes), the Government Code and POST requirements. PRAC always welcomes new park ranger programs into the fold, but they should follow the legal requirements set forth by the State. Some agencies do it right and others seem to ignore the legal requirements.

One agency that has done it right is the Casitas Municipal Water District (CMWD), which swore in their new park rangers in August 2017. Per the CMWD website “Visitors at the Lake Casitas Recreation Area will be greeted by Casitas’ new Park Ranger staff. The Park Rangers were presented badges during the August 9, 2017 Casitas Board meeting. The Park Rangers are sworn peace officers that serve as

ambassadors and protectors of the Lake Casitas Recreation Area, Lake Casitas, and the surrounding watershed lands, while ensuring public safety.

The Park Rangers were selected in the last few months from a competitive interview process and meet strict requirements that include the completion of law enforcement training, an in-depth background investigation, psychological exam and a physical agility test that are all in compliance with POST standards (California Peace Officers Standards and Training).”

CMWD went through a lengthy process to establish their new park ranger program, but they saw the inherent value of peace officer park rangers and the need to follow the legal requirement to establish a park ranger program. You can find out more here; <http://www.drivecms.com/uploads/casitaswater.org/5-25-16%20Minutes.pdf>

Carol Belser, the Park Services Manager for CMWD will be presenting at our 2018 California Parks Conference. Her presentation will be on establishing a peace officer park ranger program.

Sadly, and all too often, agencies establishing new ranger programs are doing it in an improper and illegal fashion. I welcome new park ranger programs, they are a valuable asset to whatever agencies decide to create them, but they need to do it in a proper and legal manner, otherwise there could be legal ramifications and tremendous liabilities created.

Currently, I am aware of at least eight local agencies that have created non-sworn, non-

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peace officer ranger programs that are in clear violation of Public Resources Code Section 4022. Three of the programs were established by traditional law enforcement agencies (two police departments and one sheriff's office)! Ironically, these law enforcement agencies would not tolerate the unlawful use of the police or sheriff job titles. Once again, I want to stress I am NOT opposed to these agencies creating ranger or park ranger programs, it just needs to be done in a way that complies with the legal mandates that the State of California requires for the use of the job title.

The most recent example that I am aware of is a Southern California police department that just established a new non-sworn park ranger program in July 2017. The police captain who oversees the program was stated as saying; "We wanted to make sure that people did not misidentify the rangers as a law enforcement officer, as a peace officer with arrest powers." (the police department is willfully misusing the park ranger title in violation of state law). This is a problem and shows a clear lack of understanding of the role of the park ranger, the long history of park rangers performing law enforcement duties in California (since 1866) and failure to comply with the legal requirements of the use of the "Park Ranger" title on the part of the police department. As a peace officer park ranger, I find the actions of the police department insulting to the park ranger profession and creating potential officer safety issues for peace officer rangers, especially anywhere near this Southern California city.

An article written by the local press about this police department "ranger" program stated "The program kicked off in July and now has

two full-time rangers on their payroll. But these are not like rangers you would see in a national park." All I can say is wow! Really? Law enforcement was one of the key reasons the park rangers were established in National Parks. I guess the police department is unaware that many national park rangers are commissioned federal law enforcement officers. Let's not forget Horace Albright, the second Director of the National Park Service stated that "The ranger is primarily a policeman..." and... "the ranger force is the park police force."

The article also went on to interview one of the new "rangers" and he stated, "a couple was walking in front of me and some birds took off and they were like, 'Oh we have a ranger behind us what type of birds are those?' Well I'm not that type of ranger. I'm a police ranger, not a park ranger." Once again, my reaction was "wow! Really?" I've been a peace officer park ranger for nearly 23 years and the attitude displayed by the "ranger" made my stomach turn and gives the ranger profession a bad name. My job is to "protect and preserve" and knowing the resources that I'm sworn to protect and preserve is important. The attitude that this "ranger" displayed is a disservice to the public. The public wants park rangers that can protect the public and the parks, but they also want park rangers that know the park, its plants and animals, and is approachable and knowledgeable.

As Casitas Municipal Water District stated, "the Park Rangers are sworn peace officers that serve as ambassadors and protectors ... while ensuring public safety." More agencies need to follow the lead of CMWD when establishing new park ranger programs.

# **PRAC's 2017-2018 Scholarship Award Winner Andrew Smith**

I am immensely honored and grateful to the Park Rangers Association of California for the scholarship towards my education in the field of Park Management at West Valley College in Saratoga, CA. It means a lot to me to have the support of such a prestigious organization as I pursue my dream of one day becoming a park ranger. These funds will go a long way in helping pay for my school tuition, books, supplies and certifications that I need to one day become a park ranger in one of our country's beautiful parks and preserves.

It is only recently that I decided to make the leap of faith and change my career path, study at the Park Management Program at West Valley College and pursue work as a park ranger. As the grandson of a former National Park Ranger in Yosemite National Park, I am looking to pursue my family's passion and legacy in conservation, land stewardship and outdoor education by going back to school to work in and protect our country's parks. Prior to this path I worked in educational technology in the Silicon Valley. While this fulfilled my fundamental passion for improving the educational outcomes for students in our country, it did not satisfy my deep-rooted passions for the outdoors and working directly with people; thus, sparking a big life move for me.

I have not once in the eight months since I made the jump to this path ever regretted it and I do not foresee that happening in the future either. I am happier and more fulfilled in this new career path than I have ever been. I am continually in awe of the learning opportunities and support that I have found in this new industry, and am excited for the adventures that lie ahead. This industry has already given me so much; I just hope to work my hardest in return to repay the favor to generations present and future by protecting our nation's greatest natural jewels. I am very passionate about the role that land stewardship can play in bettering the lives of all that it touches, and I firmly believe that working as a park ranger would allow me to continue this work.



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Submissions can 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 15<sup>th</sup> of FEBRUARY, April, JUNE, AUGUST, OCTOBER, AND DECEMBER.**

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SUPPORTING.....\$100 \_\_\_\_\_

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