



Third Quarter 2021

We are working hard to make sure you are getting the most out of your membership with PRAC. So this year we are excited to announce additional rewards for our individual members!

Keep reading this newsletter for details about the rewards program as well as the official announcement of our 2022 Conference and updates regarding the Park Ranger Certification Program. Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy this [virtual SARTopo Training and](#) stay tuned for more upcoming virtual trainings.

This newsletter offers a glimpse into a newly established park ranger program at Rancho Palos Verdes as well as a review of the virtual Certified Interpretive Guide training program.

Getting to Know You: Rancho Palos Verdes



By Richard Weiner, Region 3 Director

The Palos Verdes Peninsula has its roots as far back as the early 1900's, when for a brief period of time, it enjoyed prosperity as a cattle ranch and a rich farming area. In 1913, Frank A. Vanderlip, president of the National Bank of New York, purchased the 16,000-acre Palos Verdes Peninsula with a vision to develop the “most fashionable and exclusive residential colony” in the nation. Unfortunately, his dream was put on hold after the Stock Market Crash, the Great Depression, and the onset of World War II. None of these setbacks reduced the beauty and desirability of the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes was incorporated in 1973, fueled development and high-density construction along its coastline. Today, the City covers 13.5 square miles of land and 7.5 miles of coastline and has a population of 40,948. As the city grew, it required investment in public infrastructure and experienced a growing pressure for private development.

The City is unique in that it possesses a high concentration of quality coastal sage scrub habitat, which supports listed and sensitive species, including the California Gnatcatcher and the El Segundo blue butterfly. In 1996, the City entered into a planning agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a Natural Communities Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP) that would both help the City streamline the environmental permit process for public and private projects, while preserving the 1,400-acre Palos Verdes Nature Preserve in perpetuity. After a long planning and land acquisition process, the City was granted its Section 10 Permit in 2020.

The primary purpose of the City's NCCP/HCP Preserve is habitat conservation to meet the City's NCCP/HCP requirements. However, with unanimous public support, the City chose to retain public access to the Preserve in the form of passive recreation. This takes place in the form of hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use. Passive recreational use in the Preserve is permissive, meaning that it may only take place if it does not negatively impact the natural resources of the Preserve. And so, the City worked with its Habitat Manager, the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy, and the Wildlife Agencies listed above to create a Preserve Public Use Master Plan to define public access to the Preserve in a way that balances passive recreational use and amenities with natural resource protection.



The City utilizes enforcement personnel to enforce the Preserve Public Use Master Plan and Municipal Code for public safety and natural resource protection. The City contracted with the Mountains and Recreation Conservation Authority for enforcement in 2009-2016. In 2016, the City shifted to the employment of two Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department "Preserve Deputies" to patrol the Preserve. In 2019, the City began its own Park Ranger Program. The new program includes four full-time Park Rangers. It also allowed the City to double open space enforcement presence, while lowering enforcement costs. This was especially important to the City during a time when the City is observing increased use of its open space areas.

Below is an overview of the program:

1. The two most popular trailheads were frequented by approximately 250,000 visitors in 2019. This doubled in late 2020, concurrent with increases in public use many land managers observed during the pandemic. The City continues to monitor its trail use levels.
2. There are four full-time Park Rangers. The Park Ranger Program operates under the Open Space Management Division of the Recreation and Parks Department. The Open Space Management Division also includes 12 part-time personnel.
3. The Preserve encompasses 1,400 acres of open space, characterized by coastal sage scrub, and roughly 30 miles of trails. The Preserve is part of one of 17 NCCP/HCP Plans in the state. The City also manages six beaches and contains two Marine Protected Areas (MPA): The Point Vicente State Marine Conservation Area and the Abalone Cove State Marine Conservation Area. As a result, staff works closely with L.A. County Lifeguards as well as the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife to monitor MPA violations related to illegal poaching.
4. While Rangers focus their time on the Preserve, they also spend time managing City beaches and the City's 15 parks.
5. Basic Ranger training consists of P.C. 832, Basic First Aid and CPR. Additional trainings include verbal judo, de-escalation tactics, rattlesnake handling, interpretive training, and Recreational Off- Highway Vehicle Association training to operate UTVs.
6. Rangers have two 4 x 4 trucks with P.A. systems, sirens, radios, one UTV and three additional 4 x 4 trucks in the OSM Division at their disposal.
7. The City works closely with several co-managing entities and non- profit organizations that perform a variety of services for the Preserve. The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy and Los Serenos de Point Vicente Docents are two excellent non-profit organizations that help provide interpretive and educational opportunities for the public to learn more about and appreciate the Preserve.



I went on a ride-along with Supervising Ranger Norma Saldana and Senior Ranger Taylor Fox to show me the magnificent sights that can be viewed from the Preserve. When we began our tour, it was an overcast day, but after a couple hours the clouds dissipated, and we were looking across the bay at the beautiful Catalina Island. It was interesting to note that point Rancho Palos Verdes is the closest land mass to the Catalina Island.

If you are interested in a "Getting To Know You" article highlighting your agency for the Signpost, please contact your Regional Director.

Under the Flat Hat



PRAC President Matt Cerkel

As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, we are well into the summer season in our parks. Visitation patterns seem to be stabilizing as we return to some level of normality. With greater options for activities and an increased demand for travel, visitation on weekdays no longer appears to be at the same rate as weekends. However, weekends remain very busy. At the same time, we are now dealing with an extreme drought which exacerbates the fire danger due to the decrease in fuel moisture, a condition that would be more commonly observed in late summer or early fall. As rangers, we will adapt to this new challenge, just as we have adapted to the challenges that 2020 threw our way.

In 2022, the Park Rangers Association of California will bring back our annual in-person gathering, the California Parks Training event. It will be held March 6th to 10th at the [Rush Creek Lodge at Yosemite](#). Rush Creek is a great venue only minutes away from the Hwy 120 entrance at Big Oak Flat Road and 35 minutes from both Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite Valley. The room rate is \$119 a night. The promo code for reservations is **PRAC**.

So far, we plan to have training sessions on Basic Wildland Fire Investigation, Defensible Space Inspections in Parks, Interpreting Fire Behavior, Basic Search and Rescue Management for Rangers, Preventative Search and Rescue, Legal Update for Law Enforcement Rangers, and Helicopter Safety. There will be a hike at Hetch Hetchy on Monday, March 7th and a hike to the Merced Grove of Giant Sequoia on Thursday, March 10th. We hope to have a complete schedule for the conference by late September. If you have training or activity ideas or would like to present, please [contact me](#) or [Michael Warner](#).

It will be a great event and we hope to see you there!

Finally, PRAC is completing the revised version of its Park Ranger Training and Standards Certification. The standards established by the PRAC Board of Directors in March 2021 outline

the minimum skills needed in the professional. An agency may require more or less standards. The skills describe basic training in interpretation; maintenance & operations; resource management; fire management; emergency medical services; and law enforcement. The public safety standards and training follow the guidelines of the state, directed by the State Fire Marshal; California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS), Peace Officers Standards & Training (POST); CalEMSA and the CalOSHA. The goal of PRAC Certification is to provide adequately trained rangers and reduce liability to agencies employing rangers. The revised certification process will streamline the application process to make it easier for those applying for this certification.

National Association for Interpretation's Virtual Certified Interpretive Guide Course



By Andy Brown, Region 5 Director

If you work in the parks profession, you have no doubt been extraordinarily busy over the past year. With an unprecedented increase in visitation as an entire swath of the population “discovers” the great outdoors, it has been difficult for many of us to find the time to sharpen our skills, let alone attend training opportunities that meet our demanding schedules.

Fortunately, I discovered a training opportunity that was both fulfilling and convenient. Under normal circumstances, you would either need trainings are readily available or you would need to travel to attend the nearest training.

Memberships are available at various discounted levels for retirees, In the spring of 2020, I had heard that a CIG (Certified Interpretive Guide) course was to be held at Lake Tahoe, which is right in my backyard. I quickly jumped at the opportunity to register and went through the hassle involved with getting my agency to sign off on sending me to the class. Then the entire world crashed to a halt and the training was cancelled. A few months later, I discovered that NAI had adapted a few of their trainings to an online format, including the CIG course. There were several training schedules available, provided by various trainers in different time zones, offering the full 30+ hours of instruction to obtain the certification. The course that I participated in with 12 other folks took place over Zoom and Google Classroom, so it was pretty tech-heavy. Everyone in attendance was from a different part of the country, including one person from Puerto Rico!

As in any virtual training opportunity, there are pros and cons. Yes, you're going to be staring at a computer screen for hours on end, but you will also save a lot of time and money on travel. After going through the course and obtaining my CIG certification, I can say that it was worth my time. Of all of the trainings that I have attended in my 20-year career in the parks profession, ten of which I served as a Park Ranger, I would rank this training very high on the list. It's extremely relevant to anyone who is seeking to improve their public contact and customer service skill, as well as anyone who is looking for a more structured and professional approach to interpretation.

In addition to CIG, NAI has a slew of other training and certification opportunities, including Certified Interpretive Host, offered for those, who do not conduct interpretive programs (visitor center hosts, law enforcement, maintenance, etc.) as well as more advanced certifications for supervisory, management, and planning staff. There are also many online resources available, including webinars and networking opportunities and scholarships for members. Memberships are available at various discounted levels for retirees, volunteers, students and seasonal staff, as well as the regular professional membership (\$75 annually).

The online CIG course and a few others are being offered on a limited basis, so it may not be available for much longer as the availability for in-person attendance increases. Visit the [NAI website](#) for details about the Certified Interpretive Guide course and certification.

Pro-Deal Rewards for Members

We are currently working on offering a pro-deal rewards program for individual members of the organization. This program will allow outdoor goods and clothing providers to partner with professional associations and offer their products at discounted rates in appreciation for their service. This program will be rolled out in a two-tier approach with several discounts at major retailers available for standard members. The second tier will be reserved for those who purchase a lifetime membership or complete the Generalist Ranger Certification Program later this year.

The discounts will remain available as long as your membership is kept active by paying your annual dues, and PRAC staff will update the providers with an active membership list. Unfortunately, agency subscription will not grant access to these rewards. This process has worked well for many Search and Rescue organizations and other professional associations to allow their members to stay active.

If you have any questions, please contact [Mike Warner](#), Region 1 Director.

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Thanks for reading! Please [let us know](#) if you have ideas for what you would like to see in future issues of *The Signpost*.