



THE SIGNPOST

Fourth Quarter 2022

President's Message:

Hope you all survived the summer season in peace. We can now look forward to the “slow” season in our parks, if such a thing still exists. The last few years have been a trying time for us and our parks with the pandemic and record levels of visitation. I look forward to the return of our in-person conference, which will be held March 5th to 9th at the Rush Creek Lodge in Yosemite.

In this issue of The Signpost, you can learn more about the conference. We also have an introduction to our newest board member Norma Saldana, who represents Region 4. And you can learn more about the new PRAC Pro-Deal Program that will be rolling out soon. Finally, read about Open Space in Outer Space and learn the history of Recreation and Park Districts.

President,
Matt Cerkel



<http://www.calranger.org/2023-conference.html>



An Introduction

By Norma Saldana, Region 4 Director

Hello PRAC Members! I am the new Region 4 Director and wanted to share a little bit about myself. I attended my first PRAC Conference in 2019 but had previously heard about PRAC from a great friend, Richard Weiner, our current Region 3 Director. Richard always told tall tales of the many trainings offered, and I decided to join to find out how I could learn more!

Similar to most of our members, my journey into this profession began long before I officially had the title as a Park Ranger. I volunteered and worked for various entities for over ten years, ranging from nonprofits to conservancies and municipalities. Now I work in the beautiful city of Rancho Palos Verdes, where I am part of a small but mighty team of five full time Park Rangers, in a new program that officially kicked off at the start of the pandemic.

Although I live and work in Los Angeles County, I still love to travel and explore the surrounding open spaces throughout California. There's so much more to learn from this profession and I am thrilled to connect with colleagues and make new friends who share my love for the outdoors.

Call for Updates to Directory

By Michael Warner, Region 2 Director

Please submit any needed updates for the PRAC Ranger Agency Directory by January 1st, 2022. You can review the current document here: [Ranger Agency Directory](#)





Open Space in Outer Space Protection of Natural and Cultural Resources in a New Age of Space Travel

by Michael Warner, Region 2 Director



A volcano, two and half times the size of Mt Everest. A canyon 20 times the size of the Grand Canyon. The historic first landing site on our nearest celestial neighbor. The solar system is full of many potential areas of natural and cultural significance.

Recently, I read an article that posed the question: how we should protect natural wonders on planets beyond our own? This question has been asked since at least 2004, when scientists Charles Cockell and Gerdna Horneck proposed protecting seven significant natural areas of Mars. This proposal never gained significant traction though, and only occasionally resurfaces every few years in different articles.

Recent strides in both the public and private sector space travel should spur us to re-examine these ideas. Specifically, the space tourism market has rapidly grown in the last three or so years. We owe it to future generations to make sure we go to these new frontiers with a plan, as we are possibly only 10 to 15 years away from this reality. While there has been much discussion about how to build new colonies, and how to exploit geological resources of these new spaces, there hasn't been nearly as much planning for the protection and preservation of areas of significant natural and cultural value.



Who would have the authority to oversee a park on another planet or moon? The United Nations tried to address this issue in 1979 with the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies also known as the “Moon Treaty.” It posited that all claims on planetary bodies should be made under the United Nations banner for all of humanity. Furthermore, it gave authority under article seven for the creation of scientific preserves if an area was found to be of scientific value.

Unfortunately, only 18 states of the 202 states have joined as parties to the treaty. The non-parties include the only self-launching human space flight countries: the United States, Russia, and China. In contradiction to the treaty, the United States, Luxembourg, Japan, China, India and Russia have passed legislation giving their countries exclusive mineral rights to any claims on other planetary bodies. Thus, any international cooperation is probably out of the question any time soon.



Individual countries could try to establish their own parks or preserves, based on the administration for their own parks. The United States has some well-known National Parks and could already lay claim to significant features on celestial bodies. Though there are many problems with this idea. It is difficult already for agencies like the National Park Service or Forest Service to support all their earth-bound operations financially. Now imagine adding sites like the Apollo 11 Historic Landing Site, or Olympus Mons National Park (the size of Arizona, and 2.5 times taller than Mt Everest). If you thought logistics in the Sierra Nevada Mountains could be hard, try another planet!



The private sector could be helpful in protecting these sites as tourist destinations that would drive private space flight sales. The private sector can also bring a wider base of stakeholders to the table, much like the international community could, and has the potential to have better access to financial resources to support a park-building endeavor. But as the 2015 Yosemite name debacle highlighted, the dangers of giving too much power to private entities could result in complete control of the resource. Thus, making it less accessible to the public, and denying public oversight on any decisions to be made about the resource being protected.



If these protected sites are established, there will be a need for Park Rangers to protect them as well.

The future first Park Rangers of these parks, preserves, and historic sites have not been born yet. But their careers will probably have more in common with their predecessors in the late 1800s, rather than us. They will have to be rugged individuals, self-motivated, and able to carry out their duties without direct supervision for long periods. They will work in the most inhospitable places, with little support, and will have to improvise at every step.

But like all the Park Rangers before them, their duty will be to “Protect the park from the people, people from the park, and the people from the people.”. Much like Harry Yount, the first Park Ranger of Yellowstone National Park.

Maybe some of the answers we are looking for are in our past. We should take these lessons forward to the new frontier to preserve these resources for future generations.



The History of California’s Recreation & Park Districts Before 1957

By Jeff Ohlfs, U.S. Chief Park Ranger (Ret.)

For the 150th Anniversary of Yosemite conference (2014), I researched and presented a history of parks in California. Like many of you, I had never given the legislation of establishing Recreation and Park Districts (RPD) much thought, though I had basic knowledge of the RPDs in California. Recently, much to my surprise, my local historical society reprinted an article saying the Twentynine Palms RPD was the first in the state to be created by voters in 1938. Well, I knew from my previous research that wasn’t correct so down the rabbit hole I went. Here’s the best of what I’ve been able to research.

Recreation and Park Districts started under five separate pieces of legislation (1927, 1931, 1933, 1939, and 1947) until the legislature merged them in 1957 (Table 1). The first statute in 1927 was enacted the same day as the California State Park System was created. Two more were enacted before 1939 when the State created the Public Resources Code (PRC) to reorganize and codify the earlier laws and establish a new category “Recreation, Park, and Parkway Districts.” The 1957 statute renamed all Districts to “Recreation and Park Districts” while retaining the Regional Park Districts separately.

Table 2 is an attempt to show a comparison between each of the statutes. Now to make it even more confusing, some Recreation and Park Districts (like the village of Joshua Tree) exist under the Community Services District (CSD) Law of 1955.

Baldwin Park Recreation, Park, & Parkway District appears to be the first created by voters on August 5, 1930 (*Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1930, p. 18). This District has since been dissolved into the City of Baldwin Park. According to the 2001 “Legislative History of Senate Bill 707 and the Recreation and Park District Law,” the State passed a “recreation districts” bill in 1931. Subsequently, Big Bear Valley Recreation and Park District was created on April 23, 1934. It was the first Recreation District in the state and is currently the oldest operating RPD.

Out of 80 known RPDs before 1957, 25 have been dissolved, 19 were absorbed by a city, 2 changed to a Landscape Maintenance District (LMD per Landscaping & Lighting Act



of 1972), and 1 changed into a CSD (Table 3). Since 1957, 43 RPDs have been created of which one was later absorbed by a city. An additional six were created under their own or other legislation.

Table 1: Legislative Succession

	PRC:	Date/Statute:		
1927 Statutes Chapter 706 Recreation, Park, & Parkway Districts	5400	1939 Statutes Chapter 93	1957 Statutes Chapter 2165 (PRC 5780)	2001 Statutes Chapter 15 (PRC 20815)
1931 Statutes Chapter 1058 County Recreation Districts	5431			
1939 Statutes Chapter 93 Park, Recreation, & Parkway Districts	5630			
1947 Statutes Chapter 1193 Regional Shoreline Park & Recreation Districts	5680			
1933 Statutes Chapter 1043 Regional Park Districts	5500	1939 Statutes Chapter 93		
1951 District Organization Law - Community Service Districts (Elected)	1951 GC 58000	1955 GC 56036	2006 GC 61000	
2008 Community Service Area Law (County Board of Supervisors)	Government Code Section 25210			
Joint Power Authority	Government Code Section 6500			
Municipal Utilities District	1921 Stat p. 245			

Table 2: Legislative Elements Compared

Recreation Park & Parkway Districts	County Recreation Districts	Regional Park Districts	Park, Recreation & Parkway Districts	Regional Shoreline Park & Recreation Districts
1927 (July 29) Statutes Chapter 706 PRC (5400) 5780 Outside USFS >1 mi. Pacific Ocean Acquire Land	1931 (August 14) Statutes Chap. 1058 PRC (5431) 5780	1933 (August 7) Statutes Chap. 1043 PRC 5500 Inside MUD Bdry	1939 Statutes Chapter 93 PRC (5630) 5780 Uninc/Outside USFS	1947 (September 19) Statutes Chapter 1193 PRC (5680) 5780
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	Acquire Land	Acquire Land	-----
-----	-----	Eminent Domain	-----	Acquire Land
-----	-----	-----	-----	Eminent Domain
-----	-----	-----	-----	Lease Other Agy. Parks
-----	-----	-----	-----	Tide/Submerged Lands
-----	-----	-----	-----	Operate & Maintain
Operate & Maintain Gov by City or County	-----	Operate & Maintain 5 Board Mem. Elec.	Operate & Maintain 3 Board Mem. Elec.	5 Board Mem. Elected
-----	-----	Term 4 years	Term 3 years	Term 4 Years
-----	Construct River	Public Hearing	-----	Public Hearing
-----	-----	-----	-----	Election to Establish



--	Dams	Election to Establish	Public Hearing	Make Reg. & Laws
Public Hearing	5 Co. Trustees Aptmt	Make Reg. & Laws	Election to Establish	Misdemeanor
Election to Establish	Term 4 years	Misdemeanor	Make Regulations	Appoint Officials
Make Regulations	Public Hearing	Appoint officials	-----	Civil Serv. Retirement
-----	Election to Establish	-----	--	Levy Annual Taxes
--	Make Regulations	--	Hire Employees	Vote Annex
Hire Employees	-----	Levy Annual Taxes	-----	-----
City/Co. Civil	--	Vote Annex	--	---
Service	-----	-----	BOS Levy Tax	Create 5 Wards
Levy Annual Tax	--	--	Annex Petition	Oath of Office
Vote Annex	-----	-----	Dissolve by Petition	Police Force
Dissolve by Election	--	Create 5 Wards	-----	Issue Bonds
-----	Levy Annual Taxes	Oath of Office	--	Recall Elections
--	-----	Police Force	-----	-----
-----	--	Issue Bonds	--	---
--	-----	Recall Elections	-----	-----
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-----	Annual Report	-----	-----	-----

Table 3: RPDs Chronologically

1927	Baldwin Park Recreation, Park, & Parkway District (dissolved) (1930, 08/05-1967, 08/31)
	Morongo Recreation, Park & Parkway District (dissolved) (1934, 10/13-1936, 04/14)
	Elk Grove Park, Rec. & Parkway District (dissolved) (1935-02/05-1985, 06)
	Garden Grove Recreation, Park & Parkway District (dissolved) (1937, 02/24)
	Southeast (Norwalk) Park, Rec. & Parkway District (dissolved) (1937, 12/07-1980, 06/30)
	Twentynine Palms Park, Rec. & Parkway District (dissolved) (1938, 11/29)
	Greater Vallejo Recreation District (1944, 06/06)
	Hayward Area Rec. & Park District (1944, 12/11)
	Victorville Rec., Park & Parkway District (dissolved) (1945, 06/26-2009, 05/18)
	Fair Oaks Rec. & Park District (1945, 10/08)
	Bella Vista Park, Rec., & Parkway District (LMD) (1946, 08/30)
	Auburn Area Rec. & Park District (1948, 07/01)
	Ortega Trail (Lake Elsinore) Rec., Park, & Parkway District (dissolved) (1948, 12-2000, 02)
	Sunrise (Citrus Heights) Rec. & Park District (1950, 03/27)
	Desert (Coachella Valley RPD) Recreation District (1950, 12/18)
Pleasant Hill Rec. & Park District (1951, 01/22)	



	<p>Central Plumas Rec. & Park District (1952, 11/04) Richvale Rec. & Park District (1952, 11/04) Feather River Rec. & Park District (1953, 06/03) 120th & Central Park, Rec., & Parkway (#6) District (dissolved) (1953, 04/07) Rollingwood-Wilart Rec. & Park District (dissolved) (1956, 10/29-2018, 09/13)</p>
1931	<p>Big Bear Valley Rec. & Park District (1934, 04/23) Camp Meeker Rec. & Park District (1935, 09/28) Russian River Rec. & Park District (1941, 03/25) Occidental Recreation District (dissolved) (1941, 12/02-1960, 10/18) Del Rio Rec. & Park District (dissolved) (1942, 01/23-2015, 10) Wasco Rec. & Park District (1948, 01/29) Mount Shasta Rec. & Park District (1948, 06/21) Chico Area Rec. & Park District (1948, 11/02) Monte Rio Rec. & Park District (1948, 11/16) Ben Lomond Rec. & Park District (dissolved) (1948, 12/03-1976, 06/08) Opal Cliffs Rec. & Park District (1949, 01/24) Strawberry Recreation District (1949, 03/07) Greenfield Rec. & Park District (1953, 09/28) Weaverville-Douglas City Rec. & Park District (1954, 09/23) North County (Castroville) Rec. & Park District (1954, 11/16) Parker Dam Recreation District (dissolved) (1955, 03/29-2006, 10/20) North of the River (North Bakersfield) Rec & Park District (1955, 12/19) Bear Mountain Rec. & Park District (1956, 01/21) Cuyama Valley Recreation District (1956, 12/17)</p>
1933	<p>East Bay Regional Park District (1934, 11/04) Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (1972, 11/07) Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (1972, 11/07)</p>
1939	<p>Montebello Park, Rec., & Parkway District (LMD) (1939, 12/05-1979, 07/26) Miraleste Rec. & Park District (1940, 06/14) Costa Mesa Park, Rec., and Parkway District (dissolved) (1940, 12/17-1961, 12/20) Folsom Park, Rec., & Parkway District (dissolved) (1941, 09/30) Carmichael Rec. & Park District (1945, 10/08) Barstow Park, Rec., and Parkway District (dissolved) (1946, 04/29-2004, 07/01) Brentwood Rec. & Park District (dissolved) (1946, 05/06) Ambrose Rec. & Park District (1946, 07/15) Bloomington Rec. & Park District (1946, 10/04) Livermore Area Rec & Park District (1947, 06/10) Durham Rec. & Park District (1947, 11/04) West Side Rec. & Park District (1947, 11/10) Buena Park Park, Rec., and Parkway District (dissolved) (1947, 12/16-1956, 10/02) Lucerne Valley Park, Rec., & Parkway District (dissolved) (1948, 01/20-1961, 11/27) Lakewood Park, Rec., & Parkway District (dissolved) (1948, 08/17-1957, 06/03) Paradise Park, Rec., & Parkway District (1948, 11/02) North Fontana Rec. & Park District (dissolved) (1948, 11/23-1982, 03/24) Lucerne Rec. & Park District (dissolved) (1949, 04/12-2006, 11/07) Arden Park, Rec. & Park District (1949, 12/05) Cypress Rec. & Park District (1949, 10/18)</p>



	Weed Rec. & Park District (1950, 11/21) Apple Valley Park, Rec., and Parkway District (dissolved) (1952, 11/24-2001, 03/20) Arden Manor Rec. & Park District (1953, 06/26) Downey Park, Rec., & Parkway (#7) District (dissolved) (1953, 08/04-1966, 06/23) Desert Hot Springs Park, Rec., & Parkway District (dissolved) (1954, 10/19-1972, 02/08) Rosemead Park, Rec., & Parkway (#8) District (dissolved) (1954, 11/23) Alba Rec. & Park District (1954, 12/14) North Highlands Rec. & Park District (1955, 03/28) Rancho Rinconada (Tantau) Rec. & Park District (1955, 05/10) Tuolumne Rec. & Park District (1955, 12/27) Yucca Valley Park, Rec., & Parkway District (dissolved) (1956, 01/17-1993, 06/18) Fulton-El Camino Rec & Park District (1956, 01/25) Bellflower Park, Rec., & Parkway (#11) District (dissolved) (1956, 07/01-1959, 05/12) Southgate Rec. & Park District (1956, 08/27) Green Valley Rec. & Park District (1957, 11/30) Hesperia Rec. & Park District (1957, 07/02) Westfield Park Rec. & Park (#12) District (1957, 08/20)
1947	(none found)
1957	(43)
1933	Dunsmuir Rec. & Park District (1946, 06/04) (District Investigations Act)
1961	Lake Cuyamaca Rec. & Park District (1961, 09/15) (LCRPD Act)
1970	Humboldt Bay Harbor, Rec., & Conservation District (1970, 09/17) (HBHRCD Act)
1972	Arbuckle Parks & Rec. District (2007, 07/10) (Landscape & Lighting Sp. Assessment District Act)
2018	Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District (2018, 01/01) (LSGRRPD Act)
2018	Lower Los Angeles River Recreation and Park District (2018, 09/17) (LLARRPD Act)

I would like to thank all the many government employees who assisted me in this project.



Big Bear Valley Recreation & Park District (oldest operating RPD)



Under the Flat Hat

By Matt Cerkel, President



As I write, we're about four months away from our 2023 California Parks Training Conference which will be held March 5th to 9th at the Rush Creek Lodge in Yosemite. I am excited about the return of our in-person conference, and I hope you are too. The conference location is only 35 minutes from Yosemite Valley and the Rush Creek Lodge is an amazing facility, I'm sure many of you will enjoy.

The conference room rate, which is good from March 5 to March 10th, is \$125 a night and the promo code is PRAC1. For those who wish to arrive early on March 4th we still have a discounted rate of \$175 for that night. Just make sure to mention you are part of the conference.

The lodge itself opened in 2016 and was designed to show a modern take of National Park Rustic Architecture. Onsite amenities include the following:

- large outdoor heated pool
- two outdoor hot tubs
- spa
- nature trails
- kids zip lines



- 60-foot embankment slide
- bocce ball
- horseshoes
- life-size checkers
- nightly s'mores around the fire
- games on our poolside terrace
- indoor game area
- guest lounge
- restaurant
- bar and tavern
- general store with coffee bar



Rush Creek Lodge pool area, fire pit and main lodge

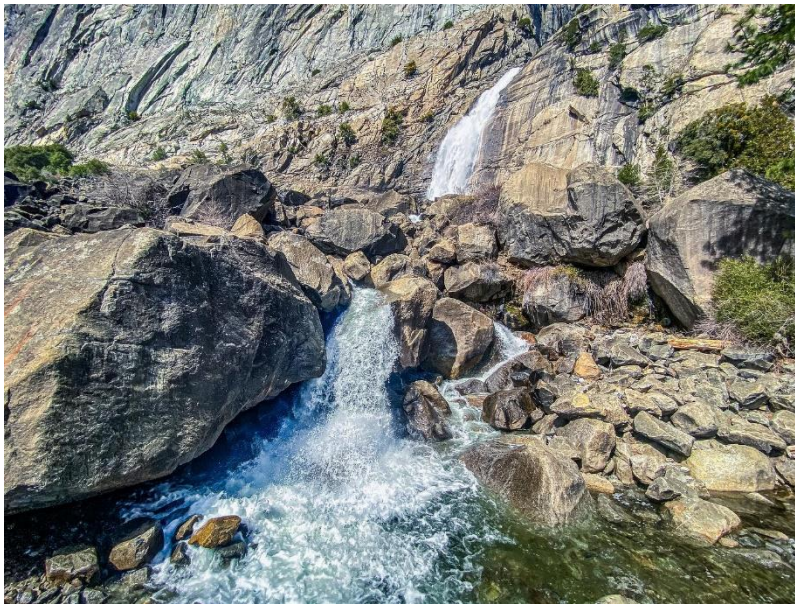
Deadline: The deadline to book a room is February 5, 2023, but it is advisable to book before then because we are likely to sell out. Visit <https://www.rushcreeklodge.com/> or call 209-379-2373 and use our promo code **PRAC1**.

Off-site activities: During the conference we will also have three off-site activities. For those arriving early we have scheduled a hike on the Westside Trail in Tuolumne City starting at noon on Sunday March 5th. The hike will follow the route of the West Side Lumber Company's legendary and historic narrow-gauge railroad above the North Fork of the Tuolumne River. The logging railroad operated between 1899 and 1962. I will be leading the hike and it may be up to seven miles round trip. Meet at the trailhead parking lot on the left just past the intersection of Buchanan and Miramonte Roads in Tuolumne City.



The Westside Trail overlooking the North Fork of the Tuolumne River

On Monday March 6th we will have a hike at Wapama Falls at Hetch Hetchy in Yosemite National Park. We hope to have representatives from Yosemite National Park and SFPUC to join us. The hike is moderate and will be about five and a half miles around trip. We will car pool from Rush Creek Lodge and be hitting the trail around noon.



Wapama Falls at Hetch Hetchy

The last off-site activity will close out the 2023 conference on March 9th. We hope to have a hike to the Merced Grove of Giant Sequoias, which is on of the three groves of Big Trees in Yosemite. We are planning to have representatives of Yosemite National Park join and discuss the fire history of these giants. The hike is moderate and will be a



three to four mile round trip, be prepared for snowy conditions on the trail. We will meet 10:30 am at Merced Grove Trailhead on Big Oak Flat Road (Hwy 120) inside Yosemite National Park. There is restoration work ongoing at the Merced Grove and as a backup we will go to the Tuolumne Grove of Giant Sequoias if the Merced Grove is closed.



The Merced Grove of Giant Sequoia

Finally, we have many great sessions and training opportunities at the conference. These sessions include:

- *Reserve Park Ranger Program*
- *Applying Tourniquets*
- *Leadership in Change*
- *Field Training Officer Program*
- *The New Deal, The Living New Deal in Parks*
- *Virtual Interpretation*
- *Telling the Untold Stories from Our Parks*
- *Visitor Use Management*
- *Working with the Public and Stakeholders*
- *Ticks and Lyme Disease*
- *Legal Update*
- *Drone (UAS) Operations in Parks*
- *Legal Update*
- *Search and Rescue Awareness for Park Rangers*



- *Incident Leadership and Safety*
- *Golden State Snakes: An Introduction to Some of California’s Most Spectacular Serpent*
- *Using the Certified Interpretive Guide Training in a Patrol Program*
- *The Black Park Ranger Experience*
- *Establishing a Junior Ranger Experience and Using Our Digital Duty Belts*

We are also finalizing several more sessions and will list them soon. For our current schedule please visit

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1S5vzSoHcvoqzFqh9ivwy9RY98M13iGcC/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100233685978359745439&rtpof=true&sd=true>

For more conference information and links, including registration forms, please visit our website: <http://www.calranger.org/2023-conference.html>

I hope to see you at the conference!

Retail Pro-Deals for Members:

By Michael Warner, Region 2 Director

As an incentive to attract new members, and to reward those who are already members of the Park Ranger Association of California (PRAC), I have been working on setting up a Retail Pro-Deal Program.

The program will be separated into two tiers, with the first tier consisting of 15 retailers providing discounts to the general membership. The second tier will be a further five retailers reserved for members who have completed PRAC’s General Ranger Certification which has been proposed by PRAC President Matt Cerkel.

More information on how to use first tier Pro-Deals will be sent to members by December 1st, 2022.





Editor's Message

By Jennifer Molidor

Hi everyone, I'm glad to be helping edit this newsletter and reading all your stories, histories, and contributions as Park Rangers. I'm a conservationist, campaigner for sustainable agriculture and wildlife advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity. I'm also a nature-loving mom of a young child and can't wait to show him the world of our National and State Parks. I lived in Yosemite and worked in the park as a teenager, and it was the best time in my life.

One thing I love talking about with President Matt Cerkel and his wife Heather is the wildlife encounters they have had as Rangers. Matt's photography is stunning as well as I am partial to the stories that photographs can tell about the worlds of wild animals. Recently he was telling me about the flop-eared fox who gave birth to several litters of kits by the Ranger station in his early days.





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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*.