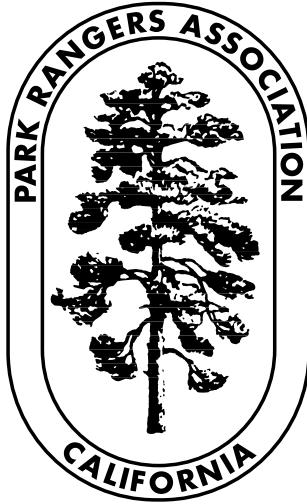


# The Signpost

July-August, 2005



## Scholarships Available

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr

I have some good news for our members. The PRAC scholarship deadline has been changed from June 1<sup>st</sup> to **September 30<sup>th</sup>**. The deadline of June 1<sup>st</sup> was originally set so that the scholarship committee could review the scholarships over the summer and award the most qualified recipients with a scholarship at the beginning of the fall session.

This seemed like a good idea at the time. Who wouldn't want to begin their school year with \$500? However, the board and the review committee have seen the number of

applicants' decline over the last few years. We are not sure why. The Board members have made presentations at Colleges and Universities that have Recreation and Park Management programs and attended job fairs so that the students are well informed. However, PRAC only had two qualified applicants last year.

PRAC has two \$500 scholarships available, The Park Ranger Association of California Scholarship and The Thomas Smith Scholarship. In fact, Smitty has just written a book and all proceeds from the book go into the scholarship fund.

### **The minimum qualifications are simple**

1. Applicants must be a Student member or Regular member of the Association.
2. The applicant must be an undergraduate enrolled in a minimum of 6.1 units or the equivalent for the semester in which the scholarship is awarded.
3. The applicant must be enrolled in a program of study in parks and recreation management, resource management, forestry or a related field.
4. The applicant must have a minimum 2.50 GPA for all college level course work completed or have shown significant improvement during the previous two semesters.
5. Submit two letters of recommendation—letters should be directed to PRAC and be specific to this scholarship

If you meet these minimum qualifications go to the PRAC web site at [www.calranger.org](http://www.calranger.org) and click on membership/scholarships and apply now. The review committee would like to have many applicants to choose from.



## **From the President's Desk**

Another Memorial Day is behind us and we are now into summer. As the summer crowds flood our parks, we do the best we can with what we have to keep things moving. It seems as though we always have to struggle with something or someone to be able to do our jobs of taking care of the precious resources entrusted to our stewardship. Much as we must be advocates for our parks and look after their interests, PRAC performs much the same role for you, the members. Over the years, PRAC has responded to many requests for assistance from members and agencies throughout the state to help provide information and support with various issues. Fellow PRAC members are always there to help each other out with information and advice. As we all face decreasing budgets, fewer staff, and increases in workloads, it is important that we all stay united. Organizations such as PRAC cross jurisdictional lines and provide park professionals a much needed way to network. As always, PRAC is seeking members that wish to become more involved with the organization and help PRAC help others. Committee members are always needed. Nominations for the fall elections will begin being accepted this September. Positions up for election this year are President, Region 2 Director, Region 4 Director, and Region 6 Director. If you or someone you know is interested in taking on a leadership role in the organization, I would urge you to consider throwing your hat in the ring. Any regular, retired, or honorary member can run for a Board position. John Havicon is the Nominating Committee Chair, so please contact him with perspective candidate information.

In other news, our Interim Executive Manager Heidi Horvitz is stepping down after finding a very suitable replacement for her. Our new Executive Manager, Marcia Joyce started training with Heidi in May and has taken the bridge entirely in June. Thank you Heidi for the dedicated service you provided flawlessly to PRAC. I also would like to welcome aboard Marcia. Thank you Marcia for deciding to step in and we all look forward to working with you. The Executive Manager is really the glue that holds the ship together and is often a thankless, behind the scenes job, that the organization could not function without. My hat goes off to anybody that is willing to perform this job.

The planning committee for the 2006 Parks Conference has been working hard planning the Laughlin, NV conference. The committee reports that they are well ahead of schedule. The conference will be at Harrah's. The committee anticipates a lot of interest from Nevada and Arizona park professionals. This should prove to be another great networking opportunity. Dave Updike is the conference co-chair. If you are interested in helping or have any ideas for the conference, please contact him directly.

The application deadline for the 2005 Scholarships has passed and we have not received any applications. The Board has decided to extend the application deadline to September 30. If you are a student or regular member, taking more than 6.0 units in a course of study related to parks and recreation, then you may be eligible to apply. If you qualify, hurry and get your application in so you don't miss a chance to receive one of our \$500 scholarships this year. Scholarship applications are available on-line at [www.calranger.org](http://www.calranger.org), in the members' only section.

That is all I had for you right now. I know we are all busy this time of year. I hope your summers are not too crazy and I talk to you again in the fall.

Stay safe,

**Mike Chiesa**

# **Truck Potatoes**

**by Lee Hickinbotham Jr**

The sun is shining, the air is warm and you are probably in your patrol truck with the windows up and the air conditioning on. This can become a problem for all of us. It happened to me over this last year. I became what I despise the most...A truck potato.

Here at my park in the winter the weather can get pretty cold and when it's cold I don't handle it too well. So I found excuses to do more vehicle patrol with the heater on. Not only did I become a truck potato but I found myself eating more cupcakes, pies and any other sweets our dear kiosk person would bring in for the staff. The next thing I knew my uniform was fitting a little tighter and I had no energy to do anything active.

Well, I decided to change. I cut back on the sweets and started riding my bike to work. I also revised my work plan to incorporate 50 hours of bike patrol between the months of April and November. Now the uniform is feeling comfortable and I have the energy to get out of the truck.

In all seriousness, vehicle patrol is an essential part of our job. At times policy doesn't allow for foot patrols when you are the only ranger on duty.

However, the visitors expect to see us out of our trucks. We need to park more often and take a walk through the campground or picnic area.

Here are 10 tips to avoid becoming a truck potato.

Revise your work plan to incorporate foot and/or bike patrol into your regular routine

Get out of your truck

Have a co-worker keep you accountable.

Get out of your truck

Take on a resource management project

Get out of your truck

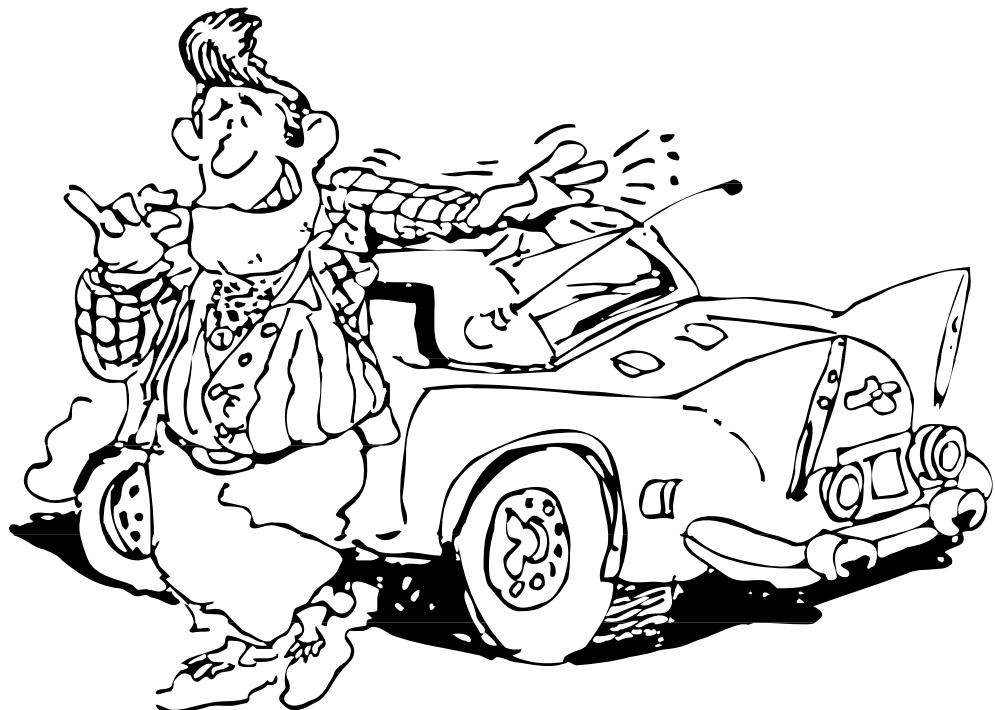
Hike the a different trail in your park once a week

Get out of your truck

Develop an interpretive program that involves walking

And last but not least...

***Get Out Of Your Truck!***



# Your Grant was funded.... Now what?

by Lori Gerbac

"Congratulations, your grant was funded" is always what we want to hear after we devote countless hours to the grant application process in order to fund that special park project. According to some proposal writers "the only thing worse than not being funded, is being funded." Once the initial thrill of your grant being funded subsides, you need to focus on managing the grant and this can seem daunting at times. Though, when effective grants management skills are used to manage the project, the likelihood for a successful outcome is increased. In this article, I will provide some grant management tips that can be used to assure projects are developed and proceed according to plan. Some of the tips are from my personal experience; others are recommendations from Heidi Lang, Assistant Grants Administrator (City of San Diego). I have also referred to an article: "*Grants management skills keep funded projects on target*" by Gail L. Ingersoll and Dianne Eberhard (Nursing Economics: May/June 1999, Vol. 17). If you are looking for more information, I recommend reading this comprehensive and interesting article.

By applying for a grant, you have successfully completed the pre-funding period of grants management. This includes securing approval to undertake the project, formulating a plan for completion, identifying and negotiating contributions, and determining the budget. Once your proposal is accepted and funded, you enter the post-funding period. Within the post funding period, there are early, middle and late phase activities required. The focus of this article will be on the post funding period and the tips provided will cover how to successfully complete the required activities.

## ***Follow the grant agreement carefully***

Read the grant proposal and the grant agreement. Sure, the grant contract is dry. Read it anyway. Look for key items such as the amount of funding, scope of work, final completion date. This will save you headaches a-plenty, and possibly money too. You want to be reimbursed for

all the materials you buy and all the hard work you do.

## ***Make safety a priority!***

Make sure that you, other staff and volunteers have the correct safety equipment for the project. Many grants allow some funding for this, so it can be worked into project costs at the beginning.

## ***Flexibility and Changes***

Be flexible, all projects require some problem resolution activities and there may be a need to make adjustments along the way.

If you would like to buy something or do something that is not specifically in the grant contract, get approval in writing from the granting agency.

## ***Communicate***

Work with the grants administrator, manager, or your administrative contact person. Ask them questions if you aren't sure about some things. Also, make sure that you both are in agreement to the field completion date. There are mounds of paperwork needed for progress payments, advances and final invoices. You may need to finish the project in the field about three months before the grant termination date. That will allow time to complete the close-out materials, and for the agency to send the check.

Build a working relationship with staff at the granting agency. If you do not have an in-house staff contact, and you have entire responsibility for the grant, work closely with the staff person at the granting agency. Call that person to introduce yourself. Ask if there's anything you can do that will make their job easier. Call later if you have any questions. Involve them a little in the project. For example, send pictures of work in progress to cheer their day. (Photos of rangers and volunteers at work are great.) Treat that person like gold. They'll guide you with this grant, and they may review your next application.

*Story continues on page 6.*

# Planning for Fire Season

by Matt Cerkel

Now that fire season is here it's time to start thinking about it, if you haven't already. Some things to think about are safety, training, equipment and your responsibilities in wildland firefighting.

Safety should always be at the top of your concerns in the area of wildland firefighting. Except to "save savable lives," there is nothing in a wildland fire worth serious injury or death! Review the 10 Standard Fire Orders, the 18 Watchout Situations and LCES. Do you have good Situational Awareness and act on it? It is key in avoiding events that can lead to tragedies. In the 1994 Storm King Fire that killed 14 firefighters, some of the survivors had made comparison, prior to the "blow up," between it and the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire that killed 13. They were aware of potential problems, but failed to correct them. Remember you have the right to turndown (refuse risk) an assignment if you feel it is unsafe. Reasons include, but are not limited to, violation of safe work practices, environmental conditions make the work unsafe, forces lack the necessary qualifications or experience, or defective equipment is being used. If you are actually fighting a fire do you know where the escape routes and safety zones are? During fire season do you monitor the local fire weather forecast? There is a lot to think about before, during and after a fire. The time to think about wildland fire safety is before

the fire and any suppression decisions should be based around safety first.

There is a direct connection between training and safety in wildland firefighting. With that thought in mind how current is your training? Remember you're only as good as your training. At a minimum, before you participate in wildland firefighting you should complete the Basic Wildland Firefighter/Fire Behavior course (S130/190) and complete at least an 8-hour refresher course annually. Ideally, it would also be good to drill regularly with the equipment you use and practice the techniques used in your area. Make training as realistic as possible, for example borrow a ventilation fan for your local fire department to simulate wind during a fire shelter deployment drill. If you get a chance it would also be beneficial to complete intermediate and even advanced wildland firefighting courses. Remember "train like you fight-fight like you train."

As for equipment, is it in good working order? Are you familiar with it? Is it compatible with equipment from other agencies and fire departments in your area? How is your personal equipment? The time to answer these questions is before a fire, not during. Questions about your fire apparatus, regardless if it's a slip-on or a dedicated engine, should include, is it in good running order? Do you exercise it regularly? How often to you check

*Story continues on page 7.*



# Your Grant was funded.... Now what?

**(Continued from page 4)**

If you have become the project manager for an existing grant, communicate with the previous managers/rangers to find out what documentation has been done, where to find it and if there have been any significant problems thus far. Hopefully they have maintained a good documentation trail.

Communicate the project goals, tasks, timeline and specifics to any subordinates that will be on your project team, so they understand the need and importance for proper documentation. Meet with your project team regularly to keep the members informed, resolve problems and stay on track.

## **Record keeping**

From the start, keep a file on the project including purchase orders, invoices, payment amounts and numbers and anything else the grant will need to obtain full payment or withstand an audit. Assure that project expenditures remain within the budgeted amounts and clearly label the types

of expenditures and date of transaction. On a monthly basis, compare the expenditures with the account budget report. Look for discrepancies and resolve any differences expeditiously.

Make sure that there is good photo documentation of the before, during and completion phases of your project. Digital cameras come handy for this, just remember to date and label the photos. They can be put on a CD later and submitted with your final paperwork. If vandalism occurs to your project site, thoroughly document it for cost recovery purposes and consideration purposes if there is potential for completion date delays.

You can't be too detail-ish. Set up some files on your computer to track the project timeline, dates, people who have contributed time to the project, employee time keeping records (for "matching grants"), tasks, budget and summaries of progress. At any given time, you may be asked to provide a report.





## **Planning for Fire Season** **(Continued from page 5.)**

it? Is the water tank full? If the pump has a separate gas tank is it full? What about associated equipment. Do you have the needed fittings, nozzles and adapters? Has your hose been tested recently? What about hand-tools, are they sharp? Are the handles tight? For your personal gear, including PPEs, questions to ask include, Are they in good shape? Do you have everything you need? Do you have a fire shelter? If you have wildland firefighting duties your employer is required to provide you with one per CCR Title 8 Section 3410. Do you carry a headlamp and a radio? You should and you should also have spare batteries for each. Also do you have drinking water? I would recommend at least two 1-quart canteens or a Camelbak or similar hydration system. Is your water fresh? How often to you change it? Do you carry fusees? I would recommend you carry at least two. Do you have food, medicines or any other personal items you may need if you're on

the fire-line for an extended period? Having your equipment ready to go makes a firefighting assignment easier and more importantly safer.

Finally, what are your wildland firefighting responsibilities? What does your agency expect of you during a fire? Find out if you don't know. Do you just perform initial attack? Or will you be on-scene through an extended attack or mop-up? How is your relationship with the fire departments in your area? Do they know what your role, capabilities and limitations are? Remember you may be the "expert" on access and/or local conditions for the fire department.

All the factors I've discussed in this article are interconnected. If you have a weak link in safety, training, equipment or your responsibilities a problem or even a tragedy could occur. Take the time to ensure you are ready for fire season. Be ready to fight fire, but provide for safety first.

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THE SIGNPOST IS PUBLISHED BY THE PARK RANGERS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA (PRAC). THE ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS IS P.O. BOX 1535, STEWARTS POINT, CA, 95480.

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**SUBMISSION DEADLINES ARE THE LAST DAY OF JANUARY, MARCH, MAY, JULY, SEPTEMBER, AND NOVEMBER.**

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