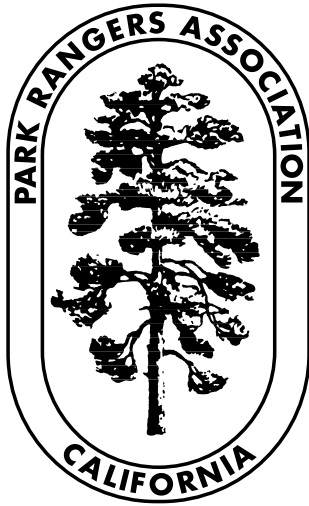


# The Signpost

March-April, 2007



## Ranger News and Updates by Matt Cerkel

For this issue of the *Signpost*, I thought that I would give you an update on some past stories.

The first update is about the San Francisco Park Ranger program, which I wrote about in the last issue of the *Signpost*. It appears the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (RPD) is recommending expanding its Ranger Program in the next budget year. According to the citizen's group PaRC—Park Rangers Coalition

“The Recreation and Park Department presented their overall fiscal goals for 2007-08. They included requesting that the current Park Rangers be changed from part-time to full-time status, and that additional Rangers be added to staff. The final decision on funding will rest with the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors.” The RPD’s report on the issue addresses level of training, level of authority and type of equipment the revised Ranger Program would have. It appears all options are on the table.

Back in December 2005, I wrote an article on aviation archaeology and historic aircraft crash sites in parks. I mentioned the “threats include souvenir hunters, unethical collectors and even uninformed park employees. It seems many times we park professionals are either unaware of the crash sites or fail to understand their historic importance.” Since then I can cite a couple of examples illustrating these threats. I have since learned that in 2003 the State Parks removed nearly all the wreckage of a USAAF C-45F that crashed in 1946 killing the crew of two. In my opinion it was an extremely short sighted move and violates part of the State Parks mission; “To provide for the...education of the people of California by protecting its most valued...cultural resources...” Another example of these threats occurred during a foot patrol on Mt Tam when I checked one of the crash sites and discovered someone has recently been digging at the site. I could tell wreckage had been moved around. I do not know if any artifacts had been removed, but it is likely. The final example occurred recently when I was informed by a well known aviation archaeologist to check out a link on eBay he sent me. An individual from Austin, Texas was accepting bids for a piece of wreckage from one of the Mt Tam crash sites where eight people were killed! To help deal with these threats to historic aircraft crash sites I plan to put together an “Aviation Archaeology Class for Park Professionals” later this year, likely in the Fall.

I will continue to update you all on past articles when there are new developments. I hope to see many of you at the 2007 California Parks Conference.

## **From the President's Patrol Truck**

The California Parks Conference is just about here and it's looking like its going to be a great one. John Havicon and his team have assembled an excellent group of presenters that is sure to have everyone talking. The field trips are some of the best in years and Dave Updike will be trying to defend his marksmanship trophy in the pistol competition. At the Tuesday Luncheon there will be an interpretive program featuring NPS Ranger Sheldon Johnson performing a Buffalo Soldier Recreation. Later that night at the Wawona Hotel Lee Stetson will be portraying John Muir.

In addition to the great field trips, sessions and presentations PRAC will be honoring a few of our own members. I will be presenting three PRAC Generalist Ranger Certificates and the Honorary Ranger award. This year I am proud to announce that David Brooks has been selected as PRAC's Honorary Ranger. David has been a ranger for close to thirty years and has been a member of PRAC since 1982 and the editor of the Signpost since 1992.

On the home-front I would like to welcome Matt Cerkel, David Moskat and Sara Girad to the board. Matt is returning as the Region 1 Director and David and Sara was voted in to replace John Havicon in Region 3 and Lori Gerbac from Region 5. John and Lori was a great asset to the Board and I wish them well.

At the last Board meeting the Board voted to donate \$500 to the State Parks Foundation for Park Advocacy Day in Sacramento. PAD is an annual event where park professionals from all over California gather at the State Capitol and go from door to door to meet with legislators, staff and members of the Governor's Administration to advocate for the protection and enhancement of California's parks. Dave Updike, David Moskat, John Havicon and myself will be there on behalf of PRAC.

The board also voted to donate \$1000 to the International Ranger Federation for a ranger documentary being made of rangers around the world. The proceeds will go to ranger families killed in the line of duty

Lastly, with the new dues options, membership is already above where we were this time last year. I look forward to seeing you at the conference.

Until next time...

*Lee*

# San Jose Park Rangers Help out

by Vanessa Rogier

**H**appy Hollow Park & Zoo and the San Jose Park Rangers have established a commitment to work with a group of Rangers called the Advance Force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The 49 park rangers that make up the Advance Force are the front-line protection for the last remaining populations of Mountain Gorillas in Virunga National Park (the DRC side) and most recently, the last remaining populations of hippos in the Congo. The Advance Force are poorly supplied and paid (they actually haven't been paid a salary in years), yet they continue to do their best to defend Virunga National Park. rangers are pitted against well-armed professional poachers hunting for ivory and bushmeat, bands of rebel insurgents and local subsistence poachers. Over the last 10 years, 97 rangers have died in the line of duty.

Happy Hollow Park & Zoo and the San Jose Park Rangers are working to change this and we asking for your help. We are working with Wildlife Direct who will purchase and deliver the Rangers desperately needed equipment—boots and uniforms, tents and food rations. We recently sent funds, donated by community members and the San Jose park rangers, to Wildlife Direct and they immediately purchased much-needed equipment including: patrol tents, uniforms, rations, boots and salary bonuses. The equipment was immediately deployed to the field and had a profound impact on the Rangers morale and in their ability to perform their jobs.

**Who the Advance Force is Protecting:** There are approximately 700 Mountain Gorillas remaining in the world, located in Virunga National Park and Bwindi National Park in Uganda. Less than two decades ago, the hippo count was over 22 thousand hippos, mostly along Lake Edward. A new aerial count has shown that years of poaching and the recent frenzied slaughter of hippos have decimated one of the most important hippo populations in the world to 315 animals. The Democratic Republic of Congo has the oldest tradition of national park management in Africa—Virunga is Africa's first National Park (second in the world after Yellowstone National Park). The local communities around Lake Edward and the Virunga are also being affected by the decimation of the hippos—hippo dung helps to sustain the lake's fish and in recent years, as the hippos have declined, so have the tilapia fish populations and fisherman's catches have plummeted.

Correspondence from the field after receiving the first donation from the San Jose Park Rangers and Happy

Hollow Park & Zoo:

1/29/06 Robert Muir Frankfurt **Zoological Society** Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo *Thank you so much, this is actually really timely as we have just lost one tenth of the remaining hippo population in two days and need to support rangers on the ground protecting the last few individuals.*

On 12/13/06 Emmanuel de Merode PhD with **The Africa Conservation Fund** wrote: *"I am writing to thank you, again, for all your support and for your very generous donation to the rangers in Virunga, and to update you on the situation. We are getting the uniforms delivered, and rations have been purchased. The salary supplements will be applied this month. We have taken this step because rangers have not received support for about ten years, despite the commitment that they have made to the protection of Virunga's wildlife, and the dangers that they face (97 have died in the last ten years). Our organization, the Africa Conservation Fund and Rob Muir's, the Frankfurt Zoological Society will be covering the shortfall of funds so that the rangers get the minimum support they require to operate, but our funds are extremely limited, so your gift makes a very big difference to our chances of making the difference in Virunga. The funds that you have provided are key to the success of the rangers' work, which is exceptionally difficult at the moment (we are trying to deal with the hippo slaughter on Lake Edward, the Ugandan Militias in the Northern forests and the rebel uprising in the Miken gorilla sector, all at the same time). I completed the aerial survey of Lake Edward today, and the numbers are not encouraging, down 70% on last year's survey. Rob went in with the advance force this morning to try to dislodge the mai-mai militias on the southern shore of Lake Edward, to protect these last remaining hippos. We'll send you accounts for your gift, and Rob, who is supervising the programme, will provide regular updates through the Congo Rangers weblog. Very many thanks indeed for your generosity and for your concern."* **Emmanuel**

If you'd like to see video clips of the Advance Force, updates from the field, and the Ranger blog, go to [www.wildlifedirect.org](http://www.wildlifedirect.org).

If you'd like to make a donation to support the efforts of the Advance Force go to [www.wildlifedirect.org](http://www.wildlifedirect.org) or mail a check to: Happy Hollow Corporation Attn: Vanessa Rogier 1300 Senter Road San Jose, CA 95112 All donations are tax-deductible and we'll send you a receipt.

# Trails In Private Developments Cinderella Comes of Age

by Roger Bell

**W**hy should residential developers consider including trails in new projects? This article will explore some darn good reasons for this important new trend—including financial advantages to developers, health benefits to residents, environmental protection, and growing public demand.

Faced with significant cutbacks in traditional sources of public funding for trails, such as the Forest Service, private resources will be increasingly important, and so we all need to understand this phenomenon and to optimize the opportunity it offers to improve our communities.

Those of us who build trails need to learn ways to connect with developers to help them realize the benefits of expert design and construction practices. This has become a primary focus of my business, and I see it expanding exponentially. Trails truly have arrived in public consciousness!

**The Neglected Stepchild:** Until recently, however, my experience has been that trails, when built at all in new home developments, only came about as a result of being conditioned by cities and counties, perhaps from pressure by local user groups, rather than due to choice or real perceived value. They were not seen as having much importance to the projects and even the public entities sometimes did not truly recognize the potential values they might provide.

In fact, trails were perceived as potentially dampening sales, because of privacy concerns, or because they might invite misuse or even crime by non-residents. As a result, trails were built with reluctance, and usually without much thought about aesthetics or sustainability. Just get it done in the least expensive way, often by hiring a landscaper or excavator operator to push some dirt around, usually in the least desirable place, such as on steep slopes between houses or on ridge tops where homes could not be built.

Trails were unwelcome stepchildren, tolerated but not warmly embraced—unkempt, ragged, hidden away, fenced off from respectable members of the community.

Commonly, trails were developed more formally as street-side bike lanes or on access roads which could double as trails. Hardscaped trails became part of the needed and important transportation infrastructure, but not really seen as part of or needed for open space access.

Consequentially, natural surface trails were poorly conceived and tended to fall quickly into disuse and disrepair. Softscaped trails were generally disliked by residents and, being less used, they tended to become unsightly nuisances rather than real amenities. This was especially true if maintenance was part of a homeowner association levy.

**Cinderella Comes Of Age:** Gradually I've seen a change in this picture. I think this owes to increased public interest and expectation, spurred by awareness that open spaces are rapidly disappearing in urban environments, that close-in trails are ways to quickly connect to nature and to recreational opportunity. Active lifestyle sports and unstructured recreational activities are some of the fastest growing sectors of the recreational market.

These factors have led to building more trails which has perhaps fueled our collective appetites, reflected in the Rails to Trails phenomenon and the Recreational Trails Programs administered by the FHWA. But in many other ways, despite this critical mass of expectation and some new public funding sources, public land trails by the Forest Service and other agencies have seen drastic cutbacks.

This heightens the importance of privately funded trails to meet the need. Along with this is a recognition that if such trails were built with more care, with attention to the importance of keeping grades down and reducing erosion so they held up and were aesthetically attractive, thus inviting respectful use, then they truly could be advantageous to projects and highly appreciated by users.

Another recognition is the importance of good planning so the trail system is integrated from the start, made part of the infrastructure, rather than as an afterthought or add-on. This also makes it possible

for the home buyer to be fully aware of the plan and not discover after purchase that a trail will traverse near his backyard—i.e. better matching of those who like trails and their availability.

Interestingly, studies of homeowner attitudes about the importance of adjacent trails indicates that initial skepticism is often replaced by strong endorsement as residents begin to use them. Those studies also indicate that, contrary to some of the fears that tend to accompany what might be called the gated community or NIMBY mentality, trails are actually factors in reducing crime. Neighbors look out for each other and have new opportunities to develop a sense of community, and they discover that visitors are generally very respectful of their privacy concerns. The vast majority of trail users, people who get out to exercise and enjoy nature, are good citizens who would, in anything, help to prevent misuse and intrusion.

Commercial interests are learning to court trail users by offering services and facilities and even changing entryway design to ease access for trail users. Hotels in Mission Bay in San Diego oriented toward a backdoor trail that was added, reflecting this awareness of its importance to their guests.

Over the past 10 years or so, it has dawned on both sellers and buyers—and studies verify this—that having a nature trail nearby contributes to an increase in property values. They have come to be seen as real amenities to projects. Thus, sellers are likely to highlight trail access in advertisements and to take extra pains to insure they are well built and safe, and buyers are seeking out developments that make quick access to such trails and open space a priority.

In some cases whole communities have made trail systems a required aspect of infrastructure so that developers expect to include that dimension if located within such cities and towns. Connectability is essential so that each new trail does become part of a system serving more than just the development within which it occurs.

Natural surface trails, stepchildren of the past, have been embraced and formally adopted, shined up, appreciated for their unique character. A true Cinderella story, if you will! They have been made essential parts of the family. Given that attention, they are thriving, thank you, and giving back real value!

A fascinating article in a recent Orange County Register in California touts the value of trails in new housing developments and open space areas near residential projects. Building upon some research about preferences of new home buyers, the article claims that their decision to buy was significantly influenced by the availability of places to walk for exercise and to get quickly into outdoor spaces close to nature. Trails even topped golf courses, parks, exercise rooms, pools, and other community amenities in one important survey by the National Association of Homebuilders. (To view the article, go to [http://www.ocregister.com/ocregister/homepage/abox/article\\_1379546.php](http://www.ocregister.com/ocregister/homepage/abox/article_1379546.php))

Martin & Associates, a Costa Mesa development and strategic consulting company, is in the early stages of planning a residential project in Springville, CA, and Randy Martin sent me a visioning paper he wrote pitching the value of building a network of trails. He cites medical research on the health and longevity benefits from walking and hiking, consumer research by American Lives showing a strong baby boomer preference for walk and play areas nearby their living spaces, social and generational interaction opportunities provided by trails, etc.

Randy was quoted in the above article from Orange County, noting that well designed trails got people in the habit of walking and socializing with other walkers. For baby boomers they helped overcome the stigma of new developments being only for older people.

He wants his project to “show stakeholders that we are serious about making trails a reality.” And rather than relying upon the use of a land trust to enforce easements, he would prefer that they contractually promise to preserve open space and access to nature as future development occurs in the area.

**Health And Fitness:** There are even more compelling arguments for the addition of trails in residential areas. Since 1993, obesity rates in America have climbed more than 60 percent. Since 1980, these rates have doubled among adults and tripled among adolescents. (*PricewaterhouseCoopers “Recreation’s role in Combating Obesity” 2004*).

To address the obesity issue, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services commissioned an

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# Trails In Private Developments

*(Continues from page 5)*

independent task force of experts to determine effective measures for reducing the nation's obesity epidemic. The Task Force on Community Preventive Services reported that "creating or enhancing places for physical activity, including walking trails, was effective in getting people to exercise more." (American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2002)

In 2003 alone, taxpayers footed the bill for \$75 billion worth of obesity-related illnesses. (***Economic Benefits of Trails "American Hiking Society Fact Sheet"***). In 2006, U.S. Steel announced that the cost of healthcare for its employees had exceeded the cost of raw materials to manufacture steel. Unim Provident Insurance Company estimated that healthcare costs per employee were approximately \$9,000 per employee in 2003.

With soaring health care costs fueled by an inactive and obese population, trails have become a "concrete" opportunity for individual fitness and recreation close to home. Appealing to individuals from all backgrounds and socioeconomic strata, using trails costs no more than the price of a pair of tennis shoes. Having neighborhood access to trails significantly increases the opportunity for physical fitness and weight reduction.

Much of this health-based information was provided by Terry Eastin from Arkansas, Executive Director of the Mississippi River Trail. Terry has also been a driving force in bringing into being a "Medical Mile" trail in the heart of downtown Little Rock. That multi-million dollar trail, featuring displays from various health management organizations, reflects an amazing partnership of political and medical interests in the State to provide visual images and information about health to residents and visitors.

Arkansas had been listed as the second worst State in the nation in terms of obesity and poor health and this project was recognized as offering a route toward reversing that unfortunate situation. The State's former Governor, Mike Huckabee, made headlines by developing a personal exercise program (using the Arkansas River Trail) enabling him to lose over 100 pounds of excess weight. This project added significant attention to that message.

**Environmental Protection:** While developers are catching on to the aesthetic, environmental, and economic importance of community trail systems, the nation's insurance and healthcare industries have come forward in full support of these efforts. As these residential trail systems are built, municipalities will be charged with linking them to commercial areas thus creating opportunities for reducing America's dependence upon fossil fuels and staving-off an obesity crises that is undermining the economic stability of American commercial enterprises.

In short, a strong case can be made that trails are a small but vitally important factor in reducing global warming. A housing development in Beaumont California has actually been challenged on the basis that its design concept will contribute to global warming. Along with encouraging use of solar panels, changing to better light bulbs, and selling more fuel efficient cars to get people to work from their new suburban homes, how about developers incorporating trails within the project to provide bikeable and walkable recreational access without need for cars. By encouraging more walking and bicycling, both for recreation and for getting to commercial areas or work, trails will help enhance energy efficiency, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions!

I suspect, from a marketing standpoint, this would be a good argument for developers to use in getting their projects approved and accepted by environmental advocates.

**Our Part:** American Trails has co-sponsored with several of its Board members an all day workshop for the development community in the Orlando Florida area near Disneyland and is exploring the possibility of offering similar programs elsewhere to build increased understanding of this phenomenon and to assist in better planning. We have also discussed the idea of creating a best practices certificate for developments and communities that emphasize trails and do a good job planning and integrating trail networks—like a good housekeeping "seal of approval," if you will. We think this can be a positive inducement, providing visible means of recognizing this important aspect of what makes communities truly livable.

# **Park Ranger: Career or Cute Little Job?**

**by Sara Girard**

I dreamed of having a park ranger career ever since I was a little kid. My parents owned a 42-acre lot, of which 32 acres remained natural, with trees full of squirrels and endless berries to munch on. I fondly remember running free through the woods with my brother. I naively asked my parents if we could change the ten acres we cultivated for food and open that property as a park. Of course, the answer was, "No."

When I turned 15, my folks eventually acquired a small saw mill and began cutting trees. I used this opportunity to study selective farming of the timber. My parents thought I was crazy. My passion continued as I obtained an Associate's Degree in Agriculture from the local community college. My education continued with a Bachelor's Degree in Park Administration at the university level. Now, it was time to get some hands-on experience. I advanced my career working in state and city parks until I achieved the status, and my childhood dream, of Park Ranger. As a career, I consider work as a park ranger as professional as being a doctor, lawyer or banker.

In contrast, I have heard too many times from others wearing the park ranger uniform that "this

is just an easy second income for our family" or "it's my post-retirement job after working thirty years in an unrelated industry." I literally cringed a few years ago when a new hire stated that being a park ranger was a "cute little job" to keep her busy while her executive husband earned six figures. Guess what? She had her first serious public confrontation a few months into the job. She promptly placed her work keys on the table and went home, never to return. It wasn't the cute little job she expected.

Land management based on studies, research and formal education help guarantee the health of parks and open space for generations to come. I believe that it takes trained, educated people to provide information and safe surroundings for thousands of visitors each year. In order to help accomplish this, park rangers need the mentality that this is a professional career choice.

All park rangers should acknowledge the career task they are entrusted with and rise to the ranks of an educated, well informed, trained professional. As for me, work as a park ranger is my career, not a cute little job.

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## **Advanced Officer Training for Park Rangers a success!**

**by John Havicon**

This January's Advanced Officer Training for Park Rangers turned out to be quite successful thanks to participation by several agencies. The 40-hour session provided the latest information on California Law, Gangs, Handling the mentally ill and making vehicle stops and the latest vehicle code changes. We also spent some time studying search techniques and reviewed the elements James Kim search from Oregon. The mountain lion session provided information on behavior and the latest techniques of using less than lethal force as an aversion technique against aggressive behavior. The last day provided some field training in search & rescue tracking.

I would like to thank the Rangers from Don Pedro Reservoir, Livermore, MRCA, Solano County, Sacramento County, California State Parks, the East Bay Park Police and The Marin Water District Deputy that attended.

I am planning to offer similar training next year, with some different subjects. I am searching for ideas.

If there is some type of law enforcement training you would like to see included, please email me at:

[on\\_belay@comcast.net](mailto:on_belay@comcast.net)

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