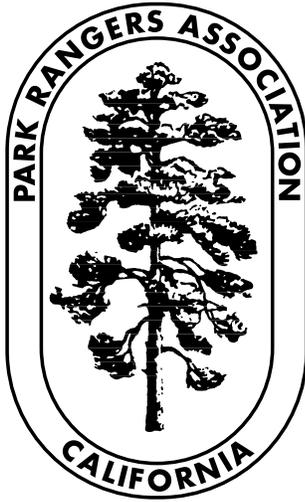


The Signpost

November - December, 2009



Election Time!

by John Havicon, Nominating Committee

Well it's election time again for the Board of Directors and the President's position. This year we are seeking candidates for Regions 2, 4, and 6. I would like to encourage as many of you as I can to throw in your hat and run. We need energetic people to help guide this organization into the future. If you are a member in one of the three regions, you are qualified to run as a director. All voting members are qualified to run for president. In the last few years, this organization has gathered a lot of energy. We have done a lot to improve the not only the organization but also our professional careers. We need to keep this energy flowing. We need our members to get involved.

Region 2 consists of members from Monterey, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties.

Region 4 consists of members from Inyo, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Tulare and Ventura counties.

Region 6 consists of members from the State of Nevada.

(To see the PRAC Region map, go to

http://www.calranger.org/images/region_map04.jpg.)

Duties of the Board of Directors are to attend quarterly Board meetings and provide direction to the organizations affairs; Plan future activities for their region members, including training workshops and social events; Write articles for the Signpost newsletters; Provide support for individual members; Provide PRAC's direction with state legislative issues, Attend job fairs or environmental fairs. Terms of office last two years, starting January 1, 2010. Travel expenses are reimbursed for the board functions

If you would like to be a candidate in your region, please contact me, John Havicon, at [on_belay@comcast.net](mailto:johnhavicon@comcast.net) or 916-875-6672. I will send you a candidate application. Election ballots will be sent out in November. If you know of someone in your region that you think would be an excellent candidate, let me know. I'll contact them for you and ask them to run

You've Been Waiting for the California Parks Conference 2010 by Marie D. Fong

On behalf of the PRAC Board I would like to announce the 2010 California Parks Conference. This year's conference will be held in the Bay Area March 15 through March 17, 2010.

Since the early 1980's, we have been fortunate to host this conference in collaboration with CSPRA. This year we are privileged to have the time and talent of CSPRA Board members in planning and organizing the conference, yet due to the difficult financial situation they are facing, they will be unable to participate monetarily.

Conference committee members are needed! If you would like to volunteer to join plan trainings, lead field trips, design logos, or generally assist in making this a great conference please contact your Region Director.

A Ranger's Christmas Wish List...

Because you only need so many gold spray-painted litter pickers!

by Park Ranger Marie D. Fong

For those of us with park rangers or park professionals on our Christmas shopping lists it can be a little challenging to find gifts that are not only personal and job appropriate, but also affordable with a government salary. If you would be so kind, let me suggest a few options that are not only budget friendly, but also eco-friendly sprinkled with a dash of ranger humor:

- Have broken litter pickers cluttering your tool shed? Spray them gold and mount them on the pile of damaged fencing your park patrons backed through each time you fixed it this summer.
- Do you have that supervisor whose desk seems to be a collection of communication devices and chargers? Add a few more! Hit up local antique stores for old school radios. I love the ones that weigh in over 5 pounds and have an eight foot long collapsible antenna that require you to exit your patrol truck to operate. If your agency's budget folks still think these are industry standard, I'd skip this.
- Do you have a Secret Santa or White Elephant tradition? I love this park twist: the "Best of Lost and Found" version. I am sure you can think of some gems buried in your park's lost and found locker. I think the matching rhinestone and pink marabou decorated black leather dog collars are my first choice for this year. Then again the pair of flaming-dice-on-a-chain left by a fire dancer at an 85 year old birthday party in our historic schoolhouse might be a close second.
- Scour antique stores and used bookstores for antique field guides. The image plates are often quite unique. Region specific guides are charming since they often document ranges, scientific names, and/or populations which have changed since the publication was printed. You will often see changes, some for better and some for the worse.
- A collection of photographs from the past year's hilarious incidents is always fun. Turning a dozen of your favorite images into a flipbook on sites like Kodak, complete with hilarious comments, is always fun and cheap. Great for your partner who might have been along for the fun on those calls. So far my images for the year include a well timed photo titled, "Marilyn MacMonroe," taken during a very windy Celtic Celebration, some touching wildlife rescue photos, and a charming picture that I didn't find funny when I snapped it: a 5 acre park T-P'd so heavily it looked like it had snowed in July.
- Do you have a staff person who had an embarrassing accident this summer? Order them a name badge from your standard uniform engraving shop. Make sure it matches their uniform, include their name, but underneath replace their title with a new descriptor. Say for the seasonal who hit your patrol truck with theirs dub them, "Risk Managers Job Security." Who know maybe you'll catch them actually wearing it next year.

Okay so if you are not feeling crafty or if you have already given a few golden tools in your district here are some other options.

Well, hope that helps and good luck buying gold spray paint in uniform... I get carded every time!

Nature Quote

"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you."

Frank Lincoln (Lloyd) Wright

Frank Lincoln (Lloyd) Wright (born June 8, 1867–April 9, 1959) was an American architect, interior designer, writer and educator, who designed more than 1,000 projects, which resulted in more than 500 completed works.

Leaked memo: California could face major lawsuits if Schwarzenegger closes state parks

by Paul Rogers

Reprinted from the San Jose Mercury News

California taxpayers could be on the hook for millions of dollars in damages if the Schwarzenegger administration moves ahead with plans to close as many as 100 state parks, according to an internal memo drafted by the state parks department's attorneys.

"It is likely that state parks would be liable for breach of contract" with the 188 agreements the state has signed with private companies that provide concession services, from restaurants to boat rentals to gift shops in parks, the memo concluded. Those concessions generated \$89 million in gross sales last year. Further, if people enter closed parks and are injured or start fires, the state "can be held responsible for dangerous conditions," the attorneys added, even if the parkgoers were trespassing.

The memo, which was written earlier this month for state parks director Ruth Coleman and distributed to high-level parks managers, was leaked and obtained by a Sacramento-based environmental group, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, which has posted it on its Web site.

The document is almost certain to increase the growing public and political pressure on Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to soften or abandon his plan to close as many as 100 state parks as a budget-saving measure. The parks closure list was expected out this week, but it has been delayed. "Often we think we are saving money when in fact we are creating new costs and unintended consequences. I take this very seriously," said Assemblyman Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, chairman of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee. Huffman plans to raise the state's potential legal exposure Tuesday at a legislative hearing he will oversee on parks closure. Roy Stearns, a spokesman for the state parks department, declined to comment Thursday on the specifics in the 11-page leaked legal document. "We feel it is attorney-client privilege," Stearns said.

There are multiple reasons the closure list has been delayed, he said. State parks leaders are trying to close as few parks as possible, and they are studying visitor numbers, revenue and complex staffing issues, including complying with union seniority guidelines. Stearns acknowledged the legal questions also have taken time. "It is abso-

lutely common and responsible for us to examine our legal liability for closing parks. We have to do that. It's part of the due process," Stearns said. Schwarzenegger would become the first governor to close a park for budget reasons in the 108-year history of California's storied state parks system — which includes ancient redwoods, the shores of Lake Tahoe, glimmering beaches and historic sites like Sutter's Fort. "We've never done this before," Stearns said. "I would hope we could have (the list) out by the end of the month."

Faced with a \$24 billion deficit amid plummeting tax revenues, the Legislature cut \$8 million from the state parks budget. Last month, Schwarzenegger cut an additional \$6.2 million through a line-item veto, for a total of \$14.2 million.

Parks director Coleman raised entrance fees and searched for partnerships with counties and cities, without much luck. She announced there was no other way to make ends meet but to close as many as 100 parks, and the governor's office agreed.

The legal headaches spelled out in the memo portray a Gordian knot of potential lawsuits.

"This shows there are no savings. It could cost taxpayers more money, so it raises the question of why are they doing this?" said Karen Schambach, California director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. Schambach said her group obtained the leaked memo from a former state parks employee. When Schambach posted it to the Web, Tara Lynch, chief legal counsel for state parks, called her and asked her to remove it, she said. She declined, citing the public interest.

If concessionaires sue over the park closures, the state could potentially have to repay them for lost sales. According to state parks budget documents, those sales totaled \$88.9 million last year, a figure that far outstrips the \$14 million the state was trying to save.

"It is likely that state parks would be in breach of contract and (the) concessionaire would be entitled to the profits he or she would have received had the contract been performed for the remaining term of the contract," the memo said.

Jack Harrison, executive director of the California Parks Hospitality Association, which represents

(Story continues on page 7.)

Natural Resources Communication Workshop

January 11-15, 2010

The Natural Resources Communication Workshop, sponsored by the Western Section of The Wildlife Society, is designed to help natural resource workers more effectively communicate with general as well as technical audiences through personal presentations using good visual aids. The workshop focuses on the use of computer-generated images created with Microsoft's PowerPoint software. The workshop is practical-oriented and enhances participants' communication skills in planning, preparing, presenting, and evaluating presentations. Since many of the problems in natural resources management are people-oriented, more effective communication can significantly improve many management programs.

Workshop Content:

1. Discussion topics include:

- Planning: communication principles, audience analysis, graphic design.
- Preparing: creating computer-generated graphics, photographic composition, rehearsal tips.
- Presenting: equipment setup, speaking tips, dealing with difficult audiences.
- Evaluating: evaluation of performance.

2. Each participant will bring a selection of computer-generated images (ex., graphics created with PowerPoint or other presentation software programs) for organization into an illustrated talk.

3. Each participant will prepare graphics (titles, graphs, charts, maps, cartoons, etc.) to be used in their presentations.

4. Each participant will give a 5- and 15-minute presentation (which will include graphics prepared during the workshop). These presentations will be evaluated by the class and the instructors.

Instructional Team: Dr. Jon K. Hooper, Professor, Calif. State Univ., Chico (Certified Wildlife Biologist, Certified Interpretive Trainer, Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology, 35 years teaching communication workshops around the country), Mr. Ethan Rotman, Calif. Dept. of Fish and Game (Coordinator, Fishing in the City in the San Francisco Bay Area, Certified Interpretive Trainer, Certified Interpretive Guide, Certified Interpretive Manager, 30 years of professional experience as an environmental interpreter and communicator), and Ms. Kim Rubin, (tour guide, interpreter, 9 years experience facilitating the Natural Resources Communication Workshop).

Location: California State University, Chico (90 miles north of Sacramento)

University Credit: Participants receive 1-unit CSUC Continuing Education credit; the workshop is worth 32 hours of continuing wildlife education credit through The Wildlife Society's Professional Development Program (Category II).

Application Procedure: The initial deadline for applications is October 30, 2009 (Friday). Late applications are accepted (such applicants will become participants if the workshop is not yet full; otherwise, they will be placed on a waiting list in case of cancellations). The registration fee is \$749. The workshop is limited to 16 participants. Since more applicants usually apply than there are spaces available, the registration fee is not due until an applicant has

been officially accepted into the workshop (this occurs shortly after the October 30 deadline).

Since the workshop has a limited capacity, all applicants will be contacted after October 30, 2009 to notify them if they have been accepted. Instructions on paying the registration fee will be provided at that time. Payment must be received before applicants will be fully registered. Failure to make timely payment will result in alternate applicants being selected.

To apply, send a letter, fax, or email describing: (1) your current position within your agency or organization, (2) how you will use the training, (3) any special reasons why you feel you should be chosen as a participant, and (4) if you already have official agency/organization approval to attend. In your application, include your address, phone number, fax number, and email. To apply or for more information, write or call:

Dr. Jon K. Hooper
Dept. Recreation and Parks Management
California State University, Chico
Chico, CA 95929-0560
(530) 898-5811 or 898-6408
fax: (530) 898-6557
e-mail: jhooper@csuchico.edu

FLASH!!! Participants in the 2010 workshop will not only learn professional tips for using PowerPoint, but also will gain exposure to Photoshop Elements (digital photo editing and cataloging software)

Deciding the Fate of Our American Parks

by Breck Parkman

As government budgets shrink and the necessity of cutting programs begins to grow, some are calling for the closure of parks. The National Parks appear to be safe for now, but numerous of our regional and state park systems are threatened in states such as Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Washington. While parks may appear to be a luxury to some people, to many of us, they are indispensable. American history demonstrates the necessity of parks to the people of our nation.

American parks are unique public lands owned by all citizens. Indeed, we the people, no matter what our station is in life, own an equal share in the parks and have a right to enjoy them. There was a time when this was a bold idea. In fact, our first parks were born of a revolutionary ideal manifest in the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers used the phrases “All men are created equal” and “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” to encompass all that is available in America. At the time, however, only white landowning males were granted the right to vote in the new republic. Most Americans then were not empowered as we are today.

A century after Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence, President Abraham Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation and, in the following year, signed the Yosemite Grant, deeding Yosemite Valley to the State of California as an inalienable public trust. Like the Proclamation preceding it, the Yosemite Grant transformed our evolving democracy. Whereas Emancipation furthered the struggle for equality, as did the Women’s Suffrage and Civil Rights Movements the following century, it was through the creation of parks that Americans were made happy, healthy, and free. The creation of our parks made all Americans landowners, thus the parks are keystones in the foundation of our democracy.

Parks, like public schools, libraries, and highways, are a vital part of the national fabric connecting the members of our society to one another. We are made free in part by the existence of our public lands, since the parks enhance our liberty and help to define who we are as Americans. If you stop to think about it, the parks are remnants of the same “American frontier” that defined the American character in our nation’s formative years, and they are sacred relics of the great American “wilderness” that our ancestors perceived to exist just beyond the frontier (albeit an incorrect perception given the land’s long occupation by Native Americans). The parks also constitute the cultural landmarks and monuments of our common history. In the preservation of our parks, future

generations of Americans will be free to discover the natural abundance, cultural heritage, and scenic wonders that moved our ancestors as they settled the breadth of North America. That was Lincoln’s purpose in preserving Yosemite in 1864. He wanted that this beautiful scenic wonder be made available to all Americans for all time to come. That was also the purpose of President Theodore Roosevelt who after meeting with the famed naturalist, John Muir, at Yosemite in 1903, was inspired to create the National Park System.

During the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt set millions of Americans to work improving the nation’s infrastructure. In a Herculean effort, crews from the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration built countless roads, schools, playgrounds, libraries, and courthouses across the land. They also created and improved more than 8,100 parks, including 29 of California’s State Parks. Interestingly, 41 parks were added to the California State Park System during that time.

It should be noted that our government chose not to close parks during the Depression. Instead, resources were directed toward their improvement. Americans rolled up their sleeves, stood shoulder-to-shoulder, and worked to improve our nation. We have our parks to enjoy today thanks to the efforts of this “greatest” generation. We can also thank them for our freedom since their labor during the Depression helped to prepare our nation for victory in World War Two.

Our grandparents faced a daunting fiscal crisis during the Depression and yet they chose to invest in parks. Now we are faced with our own fiscal crisis and we must decide whether to invest in our parks or to close them down. This should not be a partisan decision. Remember that it was a Republican, Abraham Lincoln, who helped give birth to the parks movement during the Civil War, and a Democrat, Franklin Roosevelt, who sustained the parks through the Great Depression. Surely, the Civil War and Great Depression were two of the most difficult times in our nation’s history and yet the parks endured, thanks to both Republicans and Democrats. The parks belong to all of us and they continue to be an important aspect of our national identity. Our American parks are not revenue-generating amusement parks. They are much more important than that. Like public schools, parks represent our investment in the future. For the sake of our children, and our children’s children, we must choose wisely when deciding their fate. Can we really afford to close them?

“Reminders of the Trade”

by Kenneth Wong, Region +1

Precautionary guidelines for the visiting public in helping with their safety/welfare and preventing crimes within our parks, open space and forest land. This is just a few suggestions within the vast topic of public safety. Take care and stay safe.

1) Applying the “neighborhood watch” concept (park watch program):

- Be vigilant of self and property.
- Know how to contact public safety services.
- Keep an eye out for well-being of other park users.
- Be observant of others and their activity.
- Keep an out for suspicious persons and vehicles in the parks or other recreational areas.
- Report suspicious persons
- Report criminal activity immediately.

2) Before visiting the parks, open space or forest land, get information and be prepared the unexpected:

- Obtain a map of the area that you are visiting.
- Become familiar with area; contact the local authority (rangers, park staff, etc.) for specific information.
- Obtain public safety contact numbers.
- Tell family or friends where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good running condition and has plenty of fuel.
- Be prepared in case you get lost or stranded; take extra food/water, warm clothes, flashlight, first aid, and whistle and communication device.
- Carry identification and emergency medical information on your person.

3) Parking your vehicle; whether you park your vehicle at a campground, trailhead or other locations for a few hours or days; help protect your vehicle and your valuables:

- Lock and secure your vehicle.
- Lock and secure your valuables in the truck or other location where they cannot be seen.
- Do not hide your vehicle keys on or near your vehicle.
- Note other vehicles in the area. Write down license plate numbers and descriptions of suspicious vehicle(s).

- Report suspicious activity to the local law enforcement service in the area.

4) Protecting your property; precautions to protect your property include:

- Do not carry more cash that you will need.
- Leave unnecessary valuable items at home.
- Do not make yourself a target by attracting unwanted attention.
- When leaving your campsite/vehicles, lock valuables away.
- Remember, property is less valuable than your LIFE.

5) Discovering illegal activity. Some people may use park land to conduct illegal activity. For example, illegal marijuana gardens or other illegal substance production. If you come across one:

- Do not approach or confront the individuals present at the sites; do not in any way indicate that you are suspicious of their activity.
- Immediately leave the area along the route you entered.
- Watch for other people in the area.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Potential hazards, such as harmful materials or devices.
- When you are safely away from the area, write down detailed information (persons, vehicles and place), and immediately contact the local authority.

6) Protecting your children:

- Know where you children are at all times.
- Make sure your children know the rules about strangers.
- Make sure your children know what to do if they become separated from you.
- Use extra precautions regarding your child’s personal safety.

7) Preventing personal assault:

- Be alert and aware of your surroundings and other people in the area.
- Stand tall and walk confidently.

Leaked memo

(Story continues from page 3)

companies with concession contracts in parks, said many are anxious.

“We’ve been following this very closely,” he said. “We do have some members who are very concerned. “Most of the companies are small businesses renting horses or tent cabins or running snack stands and gift shops, he said. Together they paid \$11.9 million last year in royalties to the state.

Although none have threatened lawsuits, Harrison said, they are already raising the issue of asking the state to renegotiate their contracts. Other legal problems spelled out in the memo include the Endangered Species Act. The state might face fines by the federal government if poachers kill endangered salmon, condors or other animals on unpatrolled state park property, for example.

Further, the state also could be sued under the Americans with Disabilities Act. State parks settled a 1999 lawsuit by the California Council for the Blind and Californians for Disability Rights in which the agency agreed to make its entrances, paths, signs, restrooms and other facilities accessible to the disabled between June 2009 and 2016. If state parks missed the court-ordered deadlines, the plaintiffs would likely sue, and “it is unlikely state parks could use lack of funding as a defense to making parks accessible,” the memo said.

The state may also be in violation of the California Coastal Act if it blocks public access to beaches. It even might be required by a court to write a time-consuming, costly environmental impact statement to close parks, the memo adds.

Time for Change

by Park Ranger Sara Girard

Change often means challenge. If the challenge is location, position or responsibility, meet it head on. The definition of a challenge is by nature a call to serve with special effort. All we do in life should be meet with special effort. Always remember, if it is worth doing it is worth doing right!

We are all facing many challenges with the economy. Hold tight to the things we know; friends, health and nature. We will get through this together.

- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave right away and get help if recessionary.
- Be observant of others and use discretion in acknowledging strangers.
- Avoid confrontations.
- Be respectful of your fellow outdoor enthusiasts. Always use good manners when interacting with others.
- Know how to contact public safety services.
- Carry a cellular telephone if coverage is available.
- Carry a noisemaker, such as a whistle, or other protective device that you have been trained to use.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- Never go anywhere alone. It is safer to be in pairs or a group.
- Personal safety around wildlife:
- You are responsible for your safety and the safety of wildlife. Please help keep wildlife “wild” by not approaching or feeding them.
- Please do not feed wildlife. Animals that get food from people may become aggressive. Our foods may harm an animal’s digestive system or even cause them death.
- Do not approach wildlife. All wild animals can be dangerous. Alter your route so that you will move away from animals without disturbing them. Do not block an animal’s line of travel.
- Photograph and watch wildlife from observation areas.
- Use binoculars, spotting scopes and telephoto lenses to minimize stress to animals and to provide a safe viewing distance for you.
- If an animal approaches you, it is your responsibility to move away and maintain a safe distance.

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Board Officers 2009**

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