Elections 2015

Ok gang it is that time of year again. This year we are electing Directors for Region 1, 3, and 5. If you or someone you know is interested in making a difference, throw your hat (or theirs) into the ring. Operators are standing by. (OK so the Nomination committee is really standing by.) Really it is not that difficult. Duties include, an article for the Signpost, (if I can do it so can you); taking on some challenges to move this organization and profession forward; and being there to try and direct members to the best info we have on current issues facing their agency or jobs. Probably the hardest part is getting members (That is you!) involved. We all get something from this organization otherwise we would not be reading this. If you have been taking all these benefits for a while maybe it is time to think about giving back a little. We are all here to help you make this an organization that works for you.

Nominations are accepted until November 15, with ballots going out in early December. You can send your nominations to our fearless leader at President@calranger.org

“When it comes to looking after all the species that are already endangered, there’s such a lot to do that sometimes it might all seem to be too much, especially when there are so many other important things to worry about. But if we stop trying, the chances are that pretty soon we’ll end up with a world where there are no tigers or elephants, or sawfishes or whooping cranes, or albatrosses or ground iguanas. And I think that would be a shame, don’t you?”

Martin Jenkins, Can We Save the Tiger?

Calendar of Upcoming Events 2014

- Nov 15th Nominations due for Elections Region 1,3,5
- Dec 1st Ballots for Elections Mailed to Voting Members
- Dec 15th Deadline for Articles for January Signpost
- Dec 30th Due Date for mail in Ballots
- Dec 31st Ballots Counted
- Jan 1st Dues Renewal Drive for 2015
From the Redwoods
Curbing Nuisance Behavior

As the summer winds down, we are feeling a poignant mix of relief and reflection. This is the time of year that many of us finally get some breathing space. We can start debriefing from the busy season and begin planning for the next one (which will come all too quickly). Something that I know many agencies are struggling with is the uptick in nuisance behavior in public spaces—especially parks. I’d like to share with you a few things we are implementing here in Santa Cruz. To be clear, these solutions are meant to address nuisance and antisocial behaviors such as smoking, drinking, public urination, intravenous drug use, drug sales and the like. By addressing areas with chronic antisocial behavior, we can begin to reclaim these public spaces and increase a sense of public safety in our parks.

Municipal/County/Charter Codes

While this may be the most difficult and politically arduous change to make, it is often the most effective in giving agencies leverage in curbing nuisance behavior. Ordinances that require violators to vacate the park in which they committed the offense for a specified period are particularly effective. This functions as a “time out” and can break a cycle of behavior with a tangible and immediate consequence for an infraction. This is especially helpful if your infraction citations only attach a civil penalty. For examples of this code, please check out the City of San Jose and the City of Santa Cruz. I would also encourage you all to flip through the municipal codes of your neighboring agencies. See if they have something that might be of use to your team and reach out. Also, if you’d like a template memo you can use to “sell” your idea for a new code to your management team, please email me. I am very happy to share what we have used successfully here in Santa Cruz.

Mosquito High Frequency Devices

This device, from Canadian company Moving Sound Technology, emits a high frequency, generally annoying sound. This device is best used in areas where you have frequent congregations of people in areas where visitors are not normally permitted to congregate or at times when a park is closed. Most people find the noise irritating enough that they don’t want to be around it and will move out of the area. In the City of Santa Cruz, we’ve used these devices under bridges along a main biking trail; folks are not allowed to congregate under the bridge as they block bicycle traffic. We’ve had success with this strategy, and reduced the number of complaints we receive from bicyclists.

Blue CFL Lights

You can safely say this is one of the oddest solutions we’ve tried, and the jury’s still out on whether it’s working. The basic premise behind this solution is that putting blue lights in areas, such as public restrooms, where intravenous drug users are known to frequent can deter their behavior as blue lights make it difficult to find a vein to inject. This is a widely adopted strategy in the UK and Australia; as far as we know, we are the first to try this in the United States. I will keep you posted on our findings.

LED Lighting

LED lighting might well be the easiest to sell to your management. As capital improvement projects slowly start to come back on line, many upgrades are naturally including LED as a smarter and more energy efficient alternative. These lights are much brighter than their sodium vapor predecessors and tend to be a deterrent to antisocial, after-hours behaviors, particularly in neighborhood parks. Many of these lights also feature high-intensity and low-intensity modes that activate based on movement. For example, if the light fixture senses movement, it will automatically become brighter. This offers added safety for those passing through while deterring folks who may want to linger or lurk in the dark.

These are just a few examples; I’m sure there are many more. If something here peaks your interest, please drop me a line for more information. Likewise, reach out to each other and share ideas. Remember, we’re stronger together.

I hope you all have a happy Fall. Stay safe out there.

Heather Reiter

PRAC President, Chief Ranger, City of Santa Cruz
Saying Goodbye to a Great Ranger
By Candi Hubert, Region 5 Director

OC Parks has lost a good friend and colleague in Donna Krucki to terminal cancer this last month. Donna passed away peacefully in her sleep on Sep 29th. She had a 32 year career with OC Parks and retired roughly two years ago as the Senior Park Ranger at Riley Wilderness Park. Her dedication and passion to her profession was incredibly inspiring. She always put in a hard day’s work whether it was routine maintenance, interpretation or environmental restoration. Riley and Casper’s would not be in such good ecological condition that they are today without all of Donna’s efforts. In addition to her career as a ranger, she also worked on the Southern California Mountain Lion Study as a Research Associate with Dr. Winston Vickers. Her strength, knowledge and enthusiasm for the field work and education of people about pumas and all things outdoors was legendary. She was the best mentor I have known and I know all that knew Donna feel they are a better people and park professionals for having known her. We will all miss her and do our best to carry her legacy forward.

Native American proverb

Only when the last tree is cut, only when the last river is polluted, only when the last fish is caught, will they realize that you can’t eat money.

Magic Moments
By Patrick Boyle Region 1

We really do have one of the best jobs in the world. I am often reminded of this especially this time of year when the crowds mellow out and nature gets the park back. Early this morning when the first rays of sunlight were breaking on the water I had a magic moment. A family of otters was working a bend in the river for breakfast. Five otters were working as a team to corral a school of pike minnow. It was like an Olympic synchronized swimming event minus Esther Williams. One of them came up with a large fish and then the games really began in earnest. They chased each other around the river, up the bank and through the downed trees. They snarled and barked at each other as they played tug of war with the fish. They did not pay me any attention whatsoever. As they each got a chunk of breakfast I could hear them crunching away and what almost seemed to be a throaty purr emanating between mouthfuls. Finally they all sat still in the morning sunlight, soaking up the heat, digesting their breakfast until it was time to head upriver for the next adventure.

Hope you find your own Magic Moment this season!
Park Rangers Association of California

Valor and Life Saving Award Nominations

Public safety personnel are routinely charged with handling emergency situations, and may be called upon at any time to put their own personal safety at risk. Park Rangers and other park professionals fight wild land fires, conduct search and rescue operations, apprehend criminals, provide emergency medical services, and perform other duties to ensure the safety and welfare of the public they serve.

Periodically, park professionals will face emergency situations that are so extreme that by engaging in the emergency, they not only jeopardize their personal safety, but risk their own lives. In other instances park professionals may also act with great skill during a rescue or in rendering emergency medical care that their actions directly lead to saving a persons life.

There is nothing more precious than human life. There is nothing more noble than saving or attempting to save human life.

The Park Rangers Association of California would like to recognize those park professionals that go above and beyond. Anyone may nominate a park professional for an award. Nominees do not need to be Park Rangers or PRAC Members. The nominee need only be a uniformed park professional working for a park or open space agency in California or Nevada. Nominations are currently being accepted for:

The Medal of Valor, our highest award, may be presented to any park professional who risks his or her own life to an extraordinary degree in saving or attempting to save the life of another person, or sacrifices him or her self in a heroic manner for the benefit of others. This award recognizes the recipient’s demonstration of unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger. The heroic act does not have to be related to the recipient’s official duties nor occur at their official duty station.

The Medal of Honor may be presented by the Association to individuals whose actions are admirable, but do not rise to the level required for the Award for Valor.

Life Saving Award may be present by the Association to an individual whose direct actions and superior service lead to the saving of a life.

If you are aware of any uniformed park professional that you feel is deserving of recognition please go to www.calranger.org for more information. Nominations are due by January 1, 2015 for incidents that occurred in calendar year 2014.

Region 5

My name is Candi Hubert and I am the current Director of Region 5. During the last term Region 5 has gone whale watching in Dana Point, offered a class in safely dealing with vector transmitting wildlife, social events and added several new members. Thirteen of these new members from OC Parks came to the last Training/Conference in Yosemite. This year I have been working as a co-chair on the upcoming 2015 California Parks Training/Conference which will be held in San Diego. I have made new contacts in the San Diego area which have been invaluable to our 2015 Parks Training. I’ve attended the last six PRAC Training/Conferences and look forward to having another successful one next year. I’m also on the Valor Committee which has nominated and awarded several deserving rangers over the last two years. I wish to continue these efforts in the coming year.
In 1973 we signed the endangered species act. Currently we have 485 species listed as endangered and another 189 species listed as threatened here in the United States. (Not counting plants.) Most of us recognize that it is human activities that have pushed these species to the brink. The Act is our small way of trying to be good stewards to the land and the creatures we share the it with. We are looking at adding another furry face to that list, the fisher. Why highlight the fisher? We all know some warm, and fuzzy forest creature gets way more attention than some slimy amphibian or creepy crawly spider or bug. They all have their place and their roles in this world but cuteness does count when it comes to extinction, especially when it comes to public support.

The Fisher is a mustelid; related to weasels, minks, wolverines, badgers and otters. It is about 3 feet long and weighs in around 10 pounds. The diet consists of mammals and birds not fish as the name implies. One of its favorite meals is the porcupine. Their burrows make use of a small opening or overhang and are often found under a tree cavity. and they typically raise two to five young in a litter. Fishers were hunted for their pelts and do not pose a threat to any domestic animals. It defends an active territory of approximately 10 square miles keeping other fishers out until the breeding season. It ranges from the southern end of the Sierra Nevada north into Oregon and Washington.

I included the press release here for the fisher for a couple of reasons. It is a species of personal interest since we have it in one of my park units and we should all take the time to write a comment. It also alluded to another potential issue to this creature’s demise. The press release identifies rodenticide as a major concern for the fisher population. How does this this get into the fishers environment? It comes directly from our recreation drug use. It is used extensively in Marijuana horticulture operations, which anyone here in Humboldt County can attest to, is completely out of control. (It’s time to legalize and regulate it.) It will be interesting as the fisher moves forward to being listed as threatened. Hopefully it can help get some tighter regulations on the growers, and not become the fisher vs pot issue. I am not sure the fisher (or we as a species) will survive this countries insatiable need or desire to be high and smoke dope. After all, if we are too stoned to get off the couch, how are we going to save the fisher, let alone ourselves and the planet? Ok enough with the soap box.....

For more information regarding the proposed listing of the Fisher, go to http://www.fws.gov/cno/es/fisher/

I have included a link here to the US Fish and Wildlife Listing of threatened and endangered species worldwide. Warning this is depressing.... http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/pub/listedAnimals.jsp
Save the Date

Partial listing of classes/presentations that will be offered in March 2015 Training:

- Mountain Lion
- Raptors
- Sharks
- Interpretation
- California Wolves
- Tracking
- Racial Profiling
- Wildland Fire Investigation
- OHV Training
- Bighorn Sheep
- Ski Patrol/Avalanche
- Safety around downed power lines
- First responders for missing person
- C.S.I.
- Magic for interpretation
- Native American uses for plants
- More to Come

Registration will be on the web site November 1, 2014

Hotel address:
Doubletree by Hilton
7450 Hazard Center Dr.
San Diego, Calif. 92108

The reservation cut-off date is Friday, February 6, 2015. Reservations received after this date will be accommodated on a rate and space availability basis only.

Rates are good for two days before conference and two days after the conference.

Guests can make reservations by calling 800-222 TREE (8733) and ask for your group code, CPT.

Room Rate: $125 per night
Parking: $9 per night or free on street parking
Becoming a Law Enforcement Park Ranger

The Mysteries of the Hiring Process Demystified

Pam Helmke, Acting Senior Park Ranger

If you are a college student just considering a career as a law enforcement park ranger or are looking at transitioning from a non-sworn position to a law enforcement position you will most likely experience the “joy” of the background investigation.

The background process is designed to assure the hiring agency that you are of good moral character, can handle stress and adversity, have excellent work habits, and have good decision making and judgment skills. Agencies are looking for any evidence from your past that would lead them to believe you have the fundamental skills to be a peace officer and that there is nothing in your past history that would be a liability to the hiring department.

While there is some variation from agency to agency most background investigations contain the following:

Applications; Pre-Screen; Background Investigation; Fingerprints; Polygraph Examination; Psychological and Medical Examinations.

You may not be aware but your background actually begins with your application. Was your original application properly and thoroughly completed? Did you thoroughly and truthfully answer any supplemental questions (and remember, spelling and punctuation count). The agency is looking at your ability to read and comprehend written direction and is looking at how well you communicate in writing.

Incomplete applications are typically screened out and you will be notified that you are not moving forward. If you successfully complete your application screening the next phase could be a written exam, a physical agility or you may move to:

Pre-Background Screening

This phase is often done just around the time of your first interview. You are provided with rather lengthy list of common violations, most related to drug use although other issues can be listed. You will be asked to go through the list item-by-item and answer “yes” or “no” to each question. Any yes answer will require a brief explanation.

Agencies may use the pre-background screening to disqualify an applicant that does not meet their defined standards prior to beginning the full investigation.

You will be told by the staff member moderating the screening that you must be truthful, open and honest. The basic rule in the background investigation is “You Lie-You Die”. It should be remembered that a deliberate omission is considered the same as a lie during a background.

If you are selected to move forward in the hiring process you will most likely be directed to complete a long and complex questionnaire. Many agencies use the California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Personal History Statement.

The Personal History Statement

The Personal History Statement (PHS) is a 27 page document that collects the basic information about your life. You will be asked when and where you have lived, gone to school, your work history and provide contact information for family members and references. There will be additional questions asking about any other law enforcement agencies you’ve applied too. There will be questions about your financial status, any legal issues from your past, both civil and criminal, as well as your drug use history and driving records. Most agencies give prospective candidates one to two weeks to complete this and collect certified copies of important documents related to your background such as transcripts, DMV reports, birth and marriage certificates or other designated documents. Once you complete your first PHS make a copy and keep it safe. It’s easy to build on your original document but much harder to recreate it if you apply to other agencies.

Looking for Skeletons in the Closet

When your PHS is complete you will be asked to sign waivers for the investigator. The waivers will be used to access information about you. You will then be scheduled for an interview with your investigator. Plan to spend several hours with the investigator going over your packet and talking about the things the information and documents you have provided. After you leave the office the investigator begins the hard work. A good background investigator will not only review your high school and college transcripts, but they are going to talk to your teachers and professors to ask about your attitude, your work ethic, and your demeanor in class.

(Continues on next page.)
The investigator will review your credit report, and dig into your credit history to see how you handle your finances. They will look at all the places that you’ve lived, and stop by to interview landlords, house mates, friends and your parents to see what type of tenant you are.

**Talking to Your Family and Friends**

Your investigator will also ask questions about your activities and other personal issues. A good investigator will talk with your family, your neighbors, your references and your friends. Many investigators will even travel out of the area or out of state to talk with people who know you. The investigator will also check with every law enforcement agency in the areas that you have lived looking for any past history or calls for service where your name was entered into a data base. Besides interviewing your references, a good investigator will find other people that have worked with you, other neighbors, and other classmates. The goal is to develop a true and accurate picture of your character, values and morals.

The most important thing to remember is that the investigator will find out all about you. It is absolutely vital to a successful outcome to be open and honest with your investigator. If you drove under the influence as a minor - tell your investigator. If you shoplifted, had a minor crash that wasn’t reported or experimented with drugs in college you need to be upfront. Remember if you didn’t tell the investigator first you will most likely be disqualified for lying.

**Finger Prints and Polygraph**

Fairly early in the process you will be sent for fingerprinting. Your prints will be scanned into both the state and federal law enforcement systems looking for any criminal record or any restriction on possessing a firearm. Even if the agency that you apply to doesn’t carry firearms a restriction can be cause to disqualify your application.

Your polygraph exam is used to find indications that you may not have been forthcoming with your investigator. The process includes an in-depth assessment and interview prior to the actual polygraph. A polygraph cannot be used to disqualify an applicant in and of itself. If the examiner feels that there is evidence of dishonesty you will be called back for a discrepancy interview and your investigator will look deeper into your past to find the answers.

**The Psychological and Medical Examinations**

If you have made it to this point Congratulations! The worst is behind you and most candidates that get here usually move forward.

Your psychological examination will involve a series of written tests that can take several hours. After your tests are scored you will be scheduled to meet with a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist to discuss the results of your exam. Using POST guidelines the Doctor is looking to see how you perform under the 10 Psychological Screening Dimensions for Peace Officers:

1. Social Competence
2. Teamwork
3. Adaptability/Flexibility
4. Conscientiousness/Dependability
5. Impulse Control/Attention to Safety
6. Integrity/Ethics, Emotional
7. Regulation/Stress Tolerance
8. Decision-Making/Judgment,
9. Assertiveness/Persuasiveness
10. Avoiding Substance Abuse
11. Other Risk-Taking Behavior

The medical examination will include a general physical exam that may include blood work, vision testing; including checking for color blindness; and hearing tests. The examination will be conducted by a licensed medical practitioner who is evaluating your ability to function as peace officer.

All of these steps take time. A “quick” background can take 30 to 45 days. If you have had a lot of life experience in can take the investigator longer to follow all the threads that weave together to make your life’s story.

During the process it is essential that you are open, honest, and communicate clearly with your investigator. If you think you can hide things from your investigator think again – once an investigator determines that you lied or held back essential information the process will stop and you will go no further. Being disqualified for lying will also carry over to any other law enforcement job you apply to. Remember, the goal of the investigation is not to embarrass or humiliate you - the goal is determine your qualifications to be a peace officer.

For more information on the peace officer evaluation process you can visit the California Commission Peace Officer Standards and Training web site at: www.post.ca.gov
Announcement!

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

January 5-9, 2015

The Natural Resources Communication Workshop, sponsored by the Western Section of The Wildlife Society and the Department of Recreation, Hospitality, and Parks Management at California State University-Chico, is designed to help natural resource workers more effectively communicate with general as well as technical audience members 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.

Instructor:  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). Dr. Hooper will be assisted by Ms. Kim Rubin, who has experience as a tour guide and environmental interpreter. She has 15 years experience facilitating the Natural Resources Communication Workshop.

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

University Continuing Education Credit:  Participants receive 1-unit CSUC Continuing Education credit. The workshop qualifies for a maximum of 42 contact hours in Category I of The Wildlife Society’s Certified Wildlife Biologist Renewal/Professional Development Certificate Program.

Application Procedure:  The initial deadline for applications is October 31, 2014 (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 $795. 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 31 deadline).

Since the workshop has a limited capacity, all applicants will be contacted after October 31, 2014 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 job title, address, phone number, fax number, and email. To apply or for more information, write or call:

Dr. Jon K. Hooper
Dept. Recreation, Hospitality, 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 2015 workshop will not only learn professional tips for using PowerPoint, but also will gain exposure to Photoshop Elements (digital photo editing software).
Membership Application

P.O. Box 153
Stewarts Point, CA 95480

First Class

Park Rangers Association of California
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Stewarts Point, CA 95480-0153

Park Rangers Association of California

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Submissions can be mailed to David Brooks, 560 Hillcrest Dr., Ben Lomond, CA, 95005. Information can also be submitted by telephone at (831) 336-2948.

Submission deadlines are the 15th of February, April, June, August, October, and December. Email: drangerd@comcast.net

Membership Application

Name

Address

City State Zip

Phone

Home Work

Email Address

Employer or School

Job Classification or Major

Voting Membership

Regular ..................................................... $50
Retired ..................................................... $35

Non-Voting Membership

Agency:

1-24 persons—6 mailings .................. $100
25 persons—12 mailings .................. $150
Student .................................................. $20
Associate ................................................ $35
Supporting .......................................... $100

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