On Tuesday, June 11, 2014, Santa Cruz Ranger Steve Johnson was responded to a call of a suicidal subject on the footbridge in San Lorenzo Park. The subject was a 50-year-old man with a noose around his neck.

The man tied the rope to the bridge, slipped the noose around his neck and threatened to jump from the bridge rail. Several people called 9-1-1, and Ranger Johnson responded with the Santa Cruz police to try and assist the despondent male.

Working as part of a joint park ranger/police officer team negotiators tried to talk to the man for about 15 tense minutes as he was atop the roughly 50-foot bridge. As the team came closer to the man he stepped off the rail. Ranger Johnson was part of the rescue team that was able to grab the male and wrestle him to safety before he was able to harm himself.

The male was not injured and was taken to the Santa Cruz County Behavioral Health Unit for a mental health evaluation.

In recognition of Ranger Johnson’s bravery, dedication, and willingness to place himself in harm’s way to save the life of another the Park Rangers Association of California has selected Ranger Johnson to receive the Presidential Citation for his bravery. Ranger Johnson’s actions on June 11, 2014 exemplify the highest standards of the park ranger profession and the public safety community.

Ranger Johnson is currently attending the Santa Rosa Park Ranger Academy as part of his new career with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. With the assistance of the Academy Director Brian Marvin Ranger Johnson was able to attend the 2016 Awards Banquet to receive his award in front of his peers.
Under the Flat Hat
by Matt Cerkel

On January 1 of this year I became the President of the Park Rangers Association of California and I hope to serve all of you well in that role. As President I now represent “Park Rangers and other uniformed park employees of municipal, county, special district, state and federal agencies across California, Nevada and now in our own region that covers Oregon and Washington. I will do my best to see that PRAC continues to provide “Rangers statewide with a voice in directing policy and management of parks, open space areas and natural resources.” I will also continue to see that PRAC continues “to establish statewide professional standards for Rangers through certification, legislation and interagency cooperation.” To do this I will need your participation, if you have any questions, concerns or ideas feel free to contact me at matt@calranger.org.

Also in January, I attended the first year of the State Park Leadership School, which is put on by the National Association of State Park Directors and NC State University. It is an outstanding program designed for new supervisors, mid-level managers moving into roles with greater responsibilities, and high-potential employees and exposes them to the core competencies that are crucial to be an effective professional park manager or supervisor. The first-year Curriculum was:

- Change Management
- Conservation & Stewardship of Natural Resources
- Education & Interpretive Services
- Technology in Parks
- Funding Strategies
- Conflict Resolution
- Procurement/Contract
- Customer Focus
- Leadership & Decision Making
- Identity & Traditions of State Parks
- Law Enforcement & Visitor Public Safety
- Project Management
- Risk Management
- External Relations (Friends, Volunteers, Partners)
- Planning for Natural Resources Management

The State Park Leadership School was a great place to share ideas, learn from highly experienced managers and directors, and meet other park rangers and park professionals from across the country. Despite regional differences and experiences, we all shared a love for our parks and have dealt with similar issues. I look forward to returning to the State Park Leadership school next year to complete the program and earn my certification.

Now that I have moved into a leadership role with PRAC and just finished the first part of a park leadership school, I am thinking more about various aspects of leadership. One often overlooked part of leadership in an organization is succession planning and mentoring. I believe they are often closely related and in order to have an effective succession plan you need to be effective at mentoring “high-potential employees” at all levels of the organization. Succession planning is often thought to be something done just before an employee in a key position retires, but in my opinion this type of succession planning is planning for
failure. Effective succession planning is an ongoing process that considers employees at all levels from a new seasonal park employee to a chief, superintendent or director. All employees should receive opportunities to improve their jobs skills for their current positions, and for those employees that show a desire or potential for advancement, both training and opportunities to prepare them for career advancement. Good succession planning starts before a new employee’s first day and follows that employee and all the other employees of an organization until their retirement. It ensures you have the right people, at the right time, for the right position.

As mentioned in the last paragraph, mentoring is an important part of leadership. Early in my career, when I was still seasonal, a longtime park ranger became my mentor and helped me become the park ranger I am today. He recommended what training I should attend, what skills I should learn and even taught me about the culture and politics of the organization we worked for. All these areas helped me learn the ropes and showed me the path to become an effective park ranger. To this day I feel my mentor was the most effective leader within my organization and a true ranger’s ranger. Now it is my turn, I’m now around the same age as my mentor was when he started to mentor me. I’ve had the opportunity to mentor some very promising employees, by the time you read this both have become full time park rangers and I am proud of both of them. As a mentor I followed the lead of my mentor, but did it in my style and based off what I learned. In many ways mentoring is or at least should be part of the succession planning process, because it helps prepare the employees for the next step in their careers. Mentoring is also very rewarding because when those you mentor succeed, you succeed!

Going back to the beginning, as the leader of the Park Rangers Association of California I hope I can guide our chosen profession to future success across all the states that are now part of our organization. Our organization celebrates its 40th Anniversary this year and it’s time to look forward to our next 40 years.

Getting to Know You
by Richard Weiner, Director Region 4

I am interested in writing articles for the Signpost that will introduce us to parks and open spaces within Region 4. I have written previously about parks in Portland, Oregon (Region 7) when I visited there last summer. I have had positive feedback from that article and feel there is an interest in getting to know more about our own region.

I am asking PRAC members in Region 4 to give me contact information so that I can make arrangements to visit and view their parks and open spaces for upcoming articles. Please contact me at Region 4@CalRanger.org if you are able to assist me.

Thank you
Park Professionals Receive Major Awards

During the California Parks Training in Santa Rosa this March PRAC presented three awards for life saving actions by park professionals. Nominations were sent to the Major Awards Committee for actions that occurred in 2014 and 2015. The Major Awards Committee, consisting of Sue Neary representing CSPRA, Ken Wong representing members at large, and Pam Helmke representing the PRAC board; carefully reviewed each peer nomination. The Committee conducted an independent review interviewing witnesses, examining written documentation and looking through media reports to evaluate the actions of the nominees and assure that they met the criteria for each award. The Committee then made its recommendations to the full PRAC board for final approval. For 2016 six awards were presented:

**Medal Of Honor**

On February 2, 2014, East Bay Regional Park District Police Officers Christopher Feliciano and Chad Word were dispatched to the San Pablo Reservoir to investigate a report a trespasser who was refusing to leave. On the arrival of the Officers they discovered an elderly male exhibiting signs of mental illness. The officers were able to contact the subject’s wife, and have her and a friend respond to the reservoir to pick up the subject. The subject’s wife informed the officers her husband was suffering from dementia and cancer, and had stopped taking his medication. The wife told the officers that her husband should not to operate any motorized vehicles due to his illness. While engaging the subject the male attempted to enter his vehicle to leave the area.

Concerned for the subject’s safety and welfare, and for the public’s safety, the officers attempted to persuade the subject from getting into his vehicle to leave. As Officers Feliciano and Word spoke with the subject by his vehicle, and in very close quarters, the male suddenly produced a knife and pointed it in a threatening manner towards both officers.

Officer Word quickly moved the subject’s wife and a friend from the danger area, and provided cover for Officer Feliciano. Officer Feliciano attempted to de-escalate the situation, encouraging the subject to put down the knife and surrender. Officers Feliciano and Word continued to try and talk the subject into surrendering even though they were placing their own lives at risk. As the subject became more uncooperative and unpredictable due to this physical and mental health conditions the officers were faced with a difficult choice. Officer Feliciano chose to use a less lethal option even though it placed the officers at greater risk. Officer Feliciano discharged his conducted energy weapon at the subject, causing the subject to drop his knife and allowing the officers to gain physical control over the subject without the use of lethal force.

As soon as the situation was rendered safe the Officers provided immediate medical care to the subject and requested an emergency medical response. While waiting for emergency medical units the officers provided a chair for the subject and monitored him for any prolonged effects of the conducted energy weapon use. The officers followed up by placing the subject on a psychiatric evaluation hold and he was transported by ambulance to the hospital for further evaluation and treatment. The subject’s wife later thanked both officers for their professionalism, patience, restraint, and handling of the situation.

**Lifesaving Awards**

City of San Jose Park Ranger Clifford Del Carlo was assigned to Alum Rock Park on the morning of October 11, 2015 and received word that a mountain bike rider had collapsed on the Eagle Rock fire road. Ranger Del Carlo, working alone, responded to the area and began searching for the victim. He was able to locate the victim and found other bike riders attempting to preform CPR. Ranger Del Carlo updated dispatch with the correct location and provided access directions for incoming fire engines.

Story continues on page 5
department units. He then assessed the victim and found he was unresponsive and pulseless. Ranger Del Carlo deployed an AED and applied his first shock within 90 seconds of arrival restoring the patient's pulse. The patient was still not breathing on his own and Ranger Del Carlo continued to provide critical life support treatment including oxygen and ventilation support until the San Jose Fire Department arrived on scene. Ranger Del Carlo worked with San Jose Fire rescue units until the victim was stabilized, extricated to the parking lot, and transported by ambulance to a local hospital for treatment. The patient was released from the hospital several weeks later able to converse with his family and continue treatment in a rehabilitation facility.

East Bay Regional Park District Police Officer Josh Harrington was on patrol in late night hours of December 22, 2014 in the Black Diamond Regional Preserve when he saw an occupied vehicle parked at main entrance. Due to the late hour and cold winter temperatures Officer Harrington conducted a welfare check on the occupant of the vehicle. On investigation Officer Harrington found the elderly female driver was covered in blood and in possession of a box cutter. The female had self-inflicted multiple deep lacerations to both wrists prior to Officer Harrington's arrival.

Officer Harrington secured the box cutter and requested an immediate response from the local fire department. While waiting for fire and medical units Officer Harrington applied direct pressure to the wounds and treated the patient for shock. While receiving care from Officer Harrington the patient told him that she wanted to kill herself over a family issue and told him that had he not intervened she would have continued to harm herself and wanted to die. Officer Harrington continued to provide medical care and prevent the patient from further harming herself until the arrival of emergency medical care units. The patient was transported by ambulance to a local hospital for treatment and Officer Harrington also placed the patient on a psychiatric hold to assure that she received the care she needed.

During the evening hours of June 29, 2015 East Bay Regional Park District Police Officer Brandon Wainwright was travelling through the City of Martinez when he was flagged down by several baseball players. He was directed to a City of Martinez baseball field were an adult male collapsed while fielding a fly ball.

Officer Wainwright advised Dispatch of the situation, requested immediate fire department and ambulance and followed the reporting parties to the patient. On his arrival Officer Wainwright determined that the patient was unresponsive, not breathing and had no pulse. For 13 minutes Officer Wainwright provided high quality basic life support until the arrival of the Contra Costa County Fire Department and AMR Ambulance arrived on the scene to relieve him of his rescue efforts. Fire Department and ambulance personnel provided advanced life support to the patient and he was transported to a local hospital for treatment. As a direct result of the high quality basic life support provided by Officer Wainwright the patient was released from the hospital to rejoin his family.

The awards presentation occurred in front of their peers to a well deserved standing ovation during the 2016 California Parks Conference and Training Evening Awards Banquet in Santa Rosa.

If you know a uniformed park professional that has performed above and beyond the call of duty or whose actions directly resulted in the saving of a life please contact your regional director. Nomination forms may be downloaded from the www.calranger.org. Any uniformed park professional from any agency in California, Nevada, Oregon or Washington may be nominated. Membership in PRAC is not required and the nominee does not need to be a ranger.
Special Protection for Special Places
by Matt Cerkel

I found this originally on Yosemite National Park's webpage, but modified it for general park use. I feel that often parks are not always best empowering park visitors to be guardians of the parks or to look out for their own safety or the protection of park resources.

Visitors to parks are the park’s most important guardians. With all the people visiting our parks watching over the special plants, animals, historic, and archeological sites, imagine how well-protected these park resources could be!

During your visit to our parks, be aware that there are people who either intentionally or unknowingly harm park resources. Please contact a park official if you see any of the following illegal acts:

- feeding or approaching wildlife
- hunting animals
- collecting reptiles and butterflies
- collecting plants (including pine cones)
- collecting rocks or minerals
- picking up archeological or historic items such as arrowheads
- possession of metal detectors or using them to locate and collect historic objects
- driving vehicles into sensitive meadows and off roadways
- camping outside of designated campgrounds or in no camping areas
- having a campfire in a no fire area or during periods of high fire danger
- using or possessing weapons
- vandalizing any feature in the park

If you see activities that could harm people or park resources, write down any descriptions or a vehicle license plate number and contact the park; if someone’s life is in danger, call 911.

Keep Wildlife Wild

- Respect animals at a distance: never feed or approach them.
- Keep your distance from animals, even if they approach you

- Dispose of trash in animal-proof trash cans or dumpsters
- Keep your food and trash from wildlife by storing it properly, day and night.
- Failure to obey regulations may result in a fine of up to $5,000 and/or impoundment of your property.

Pets

Some visitors choose to bring pets along on their visits. Be aware of the rules for pets in the park you are visiting. Keep your dog leashed if in doubt. Respect areas closed to pets.

Bicycling

Please respect park resources and keep bicycles on roads and trails opened to bike use. They are not allowed to travel off-trail, or in wilderness areas. Follow IMBA's Rules of the Trail: https://www.imba.com/about/rules-trail. Bicyclists under 18 years of age must wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet.

Hiking safety

Here are some basic hiking tips everyone should follow:

- Carry a headlamp on every hike, even short day hikes
- Carry and drink plenty of water (a minimum of 1 quart every 2 hours)
- Sturdy footwear with good traction might save an ankle
- Minor/moderate health or medical issues can be easily exacerbated by hiking in steep terrain—know your limits and pay attention to how you’re feeling
- Stay on the established trail

When hiking in a group, each member of the group should carry some water and food in case the party becomes separated, and the group should make a plan for where to meet up (at the vehicle, at the trailhead, etc.) if the members become separated.

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Here are some quick tips to help you hike safe:

- Have a plan
- Inform someone of where you’re going and when you plan to return
- Keep a flashlight and whistle with you
- Eat well, stay hydrated: carry plenty of water
- Stay on the trail
- Ask for HELP!
- Familiarize yourself with the area, use a map
- Expect changes in the weather
- Traffic safety

Traveling through parks by car, bus, or bicycle provides a wonderful opportunity to slow down and enjoy the park’s incredible scenery. When traveling on park roads you can protect yourself, other visitors, and park wildlife by observing the following simple rules:

- Park roads are used by both visitors and park wildlife. Please obey posted speed limits. Speeding kills wildlife!
- Use turnouts to pull completely out of the road to take photos, consult the park map, or simply enjoy the park’s scenery and wildlife.
- Wear seatbelts and use child safety seats required for children under six years of age or under 60 pounds in weight.
- All motorcyclists must wear helmets.
- Stay alive, don’t drink and drive. For your safety, park rangers enforce laws against alcohol and drug related driving offenses.
- Use tire chains when posted as being required (during snowy or icy periods).

Swimming

- Always supervise children closely.
- Swim only where allowed

- Choose swimming areas carefully and swim only during low water conditions.
- Avoid areas of “whitewater” where streams flow over rocky obstructions.
- Never swim or wade upstream from the brink of a waterfall, even if the water appears shallow and calm. Each year unsuspecting visitors are swept over waterfalls to their deaths when swimming in these areas.

Fishing

Be aware of state fishing regulations and local rules.

Water Quality

To protect yourself from disease, treat any surface water before drinking. Treatment methods include boiling for 5 minutes, use of a Giardia rated water filter, or iodine based purifier. To prevent the spread of Giardia and other water-borne disease organisms, use restroom facilities where available. In natural areas where facilities are not available, bury human waste 6 inches deep, and stay at least 100 feet away from any water source or trail while washing or camping.

Other Environmental Hazards

Diseases, insects, soil moisture, wind, fire, and snow combine with human activities to create hazardous trees (any tree, which, due to visible defects, could fall down and strike a person or property within a developed area).

Park Regulations

Contact your park, visit their webpage or ask any uniformed park employee to learn what the local park regulations. Help ensure your visit is a pleasure and a success.
Greetings from Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park  
by Candi Hubert, PRAC Vice President, Region 5 Director

I am very lucky to be working as the Senior Ranger at Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park which encompasses approximately 2,500 acres of riparian and oak woodland canyons, rolling grassland hills and steep slopes of coastal sage scrub and chaparral. The park is highlighted by scenic rock formations, including the beautiful Red Rock Canyon. There are three intermittent streams: Borrego, Serrano and Aliso Creek meandering through the park, each hosting an abundance of wildlife. Remnants of the former cattle ranching days can be seen throughout the park.

The park contains 23 trails totaling approximately 17 miles of graded roads and single-track trails, providing excellent opportunities for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. The Red Rock Canyon and Billy Goat trails are reserved for hikers only. The park also provides connectivity to other trails belonging to the OC Parks Regional Trails system, including the Edison Riding and Hiking Trail, Aliso Creek Riding and Hiking Trail, Aliso Creek Bikeway, and Aliso-Serrano Riding and Hiking Trails.

Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park has been associated with several pioneer Orange County families. In 1842, Jose Serrano was granted 10,668 acres of land known as Rancho Canada de Los Alisos. Serrano and his sons raised crops to sell such as corn, beans and watermelons. However, their principal industry was cattle, from which hides and tallow were sold. Unfortunately, the drought of 1863 and 1864 caused the death of Serrano’s herds, forcing foreclosure of the ranch to Los Angeles banker J.S. Slauson and Associates. Slauson divided the ranch into ten parcels, the largest being 10,000 acres. The property was then sold to Dwight Whiting in 1885. Whiting encouraged the development of El Toro by subdividing level land, bringing the railroad through, and by planting olive trees, grape vineyards and some 400 acres of eucalyptus trees. This area is now known as Lake Forest. However, due to the arid climate and poor soil, agricultural use was unsuccessful. In 1959, the Whiting properties were sold to V.P. Parker and Associates, and residential development has since ensued.

Acquisitions have enlarged the park to what it is today. An additional 87-acre parcel adjacent to El Toro Road just south of Cook’s Corner, known as the McFadden Ranch House, includes the ranger station. The house was built in 1915 by James McFadden to provide housing for the ranch foreman and his family, allowing them to use the ranch more fully for farming and livestock pasture.

As rangers we have many opportunities to do great activities in our parks. We are doing wonderful interpretive programs with a nearby school at Foothill Ranch. Our program involves taking the students for a hike in the park while educating them on the Flora and Fauna. We give them native seeds which they plant at school. We will be visiting their classrooms where we educate them on the role of rangers in the park. The students give us the plants they have raised and we then bring them back to the park for planting. This has been a yearly partnership between the park and the school which has been very successful.

We have another restoration project on going where we have received funds from Eagle Scouts who completed a fence project and then donated the extra $2500 back to the park. These funds will be used for native plant restoration where more students and volunteers will be able to do hands on removal of non-natives and planting of California natives.

We hope many of you in Region 5 and all other PRAC members will one day have an opportunity to visit us here at Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park.
Safeguarding The Homeless

Coming El Niño May Threaten Park Transients
by PRAC Member Jeff Price, State Parks, Ret.

I got my first introduction to transients some 50 years ago.

As teenagers, a small group of us would sometimes park along PCH near the Ventura River bridge after school, trek over the SP railroad tracks and down to a local SoCal reef where we had modest success spearfishing corbina, cabezon and perch. The wooded area along the tracks we passed through had been called “Hobo Jungle” as far back as I could remember.

On the walk to the beach, we would see broken crates, bottles and empty cans littering areas around old campfires near the tracks. I was told the area had been used by transients as a makeshift camp since the Great Depression, when so-called “hobos” would hop on and off freight trains as they slowed to make the curve approaching the Ventura River.

This open area, once a part of the vast Taylor Ranch, originally the Rancho Cañada de San Miguelito, and would later be added as a unit of the State Park System, named after the ranch co-owner Emma Catherine Wood, as “Emma Wood State Beach.” Most did not know that the huge cypress and other native trees at “Hobo Jungle” were all planted by E.P. Foster and R. Gird Percy in the early 1900s, local members of the first State Forestry Commission.

Fast forward a few decades, and I found myself then working as Chief Ranger in Half Moon Bay, now being transferred to Ventura as the Chief Ranger. One of my units was Emma Wood, a favorite from my teen years. As we explored the park on an orientation, I saw some significant environmental and cultural changes had taken place. The river had been channelized the entire distance from Casitas Springs along Highway 33, to the now completed 101 Freeway bridge and the river widened just inside the park to a large fresh water lagoon. Many of the old cypress trees were gone or burned and the dominant plants now included invasive exotics such as 25-foot tall stands of Giant Cane (Arundo sp.), and canopies of German Ivy. It truly looked much more like a “jungle” now.

A large population of homeless had taken up residence in remote portions of the park. My staff called them “squatters,” as they would literally build makeshift homes in the river bed. These were shelters of wood and cane, draped with tarps, completely decorated inside with carpet, couches, tables, old mattresses, and comfy recliners. One of my tasks was to restore the natural area of the park, as this river is listed among the nation’s most endangered. The plan included management of the lagoon for native and migratory birds, potential return of native Steelhead, exotic plant eradication, trail development, and doing something about the estimated 100 homeless living in the river bed.

The process of reclaiming the area was quickly underway. Local social service organizations were enlisted to come with us, interview the transients and help them relocate. Many did move out of the park, mostly related to “pain avoidance” I think, but just upstream a quarter-mile onto unincorporated county land, to get a way from the “social help” and uniformed Rangers.

Unfortunately, as we entered into a strong El Niño weather pattern in 1987, the choice to live in...
the upper river bed between rip-rap, rock-lined walls of the channelized river would prove a sad mistake. Huge rain storms suddenly hit the vast inland drainage of the river one evening, bringing a ten-foot wave of water down the river’s channelized chute, and a tragic and deadly end to transient use. Several lives were lost and many people were injured.

The Weather Bureau is predicting a current El Niño pattern that could bring huge amounts of rain to California in 2016. The most recent homeless count locally found 1,417 homeless persons in this area, many now living once again in the flood prone riverbeds. Does the county where you work have an estimate of how many homeless live in or near your parks? Are you aware of a somewhat tolerated homeless population living along any of your park water courses? Homelessness is an incredibly complex social issue with innumerable factors contributing to it, and it’s not easy to address on a wide scale.

In my experience, some of these people are in real jeopardy, should torrential rain hit your area. Does your agency have a plan to deal with this potential loss of life? I’d suggest you ask and have something in place soon. In 2007, Ventura county set up a plan called, “The 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness.” We are now in year 9 of that plan and I see little being done to address or correct the issue of homelessness. I understand they are updating the plan now, and hopefully will consider the dangers of living in a river bed during a major weather event.

Sacramento County
Park Ranger Job Opening

Approximate Monthly Salary: $4,099.42–$5,232.17

Incumbents are eligible to receive a 5% differential for an Intermediate POST Certificate and another 5% for an Advanced POST Certificate. Also, in June 2016, the salary for this position will receive a 4% COLA increase.

Enjoy a first or second career with Sacramento County Regional Parks. We are recruiting for full-time and part-time positions.

Part-time positions work a maximum of 1560 hours per year.

Description

Park Rangers are involved in law enforcement, visitor services, interpretive programs, resource and wildlife protection, safety enforcement, pollution control, habitat improvement, planning and development, public relations, fee collection, and related duties for the County Regional Parks System.

Park Rangers assist the public in the use of recreation facilities, protect the parks and their natural resources, and patrol the parks to ensure public safety. Park Rangers carry firearms and have the authority and responsibilities of peace officers. Under direction, they may be assigned leadwork responsibility over one or more Park Ranger Assistants and/or Park Maintenance Aides.

For more information: http://agency.governmentjobs.com/sacramento/job_bulletin.cfm?JobID=1151979
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Board Officers 2016

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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 __________________________ $5
Supporting __________________________ $100

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