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THE SIGNPOST

Third Quarter, 2018

Welcome to the NEW Signpost Newsletter!



Dear Members and Supporters of the Park Rangers Association of California,

Times are changing... it is time for *The Signpost* to change as well! Our newsletter will now come directly to your inbox in a mobile-friendly format. You can use the hyperlinks in the "In this Issue" section to jump to a specific article, or scroll through and read the whole newsletter whenever and wherever it is convenient for you.

Prefer to view the newsletter on the PRAC Website? No problem! Find it here: <http://calranger.org/newsletter.html>. Don't want this coming to your inbox? We won't be offended, just use the unsubscribe link at the bottom of this email.

We welcome [your feedback](#) on our new format!

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Getting to Know You: MRCA GIS: Understanding the Basics

2019 PRAC Conference

March 4 - 7, Ventura Beach

Hello PRAC Members:

I wanted to give everyone a brief update on next year's PRAC Conference. It will be March 4 – 7, 2019 at the . The hotel is on the beach with a pier nearby, and many good places to eat. It's also the tallest hotel in the area, with a beautiful view of the surrounding area on the top level. The hotel rate is \$128 per night. The



parking rate is \$8 per day for valet, or free in public parking adjacent to the hotel.

Here is the hotel link: <https://book.passkey.com/e/49657006>.

Our keynote speaker will be Kerry Plemmons. He is a professor at the University of Denver, where he runs the Public Safety Leadership Program. The program is developed for rangers, game wardens, police, firefighters, etc. Kerry develops leadership classes based on unity within individual agencies and working with outside agencies.

For the first time, we will be doing a joint conference with the national organization of the Park Law Enforcement Association (PLEA). The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency will also be partnering with us for the conference. PLEA is currently working on arranging a trip to the Channel Islands on Thursday, March 7th.

If anyone is interested in helping with the conference, please contact region5@calranger.org or region4@calranger.org . Our conference tracks will be Public Safety, Interpretation, and Resource/Park Management. PLEA will offer a fourth track, and both our groups are welcome to attend that track as well.

I hope to see many of you next year!

Candi Hubert

PRAC Vice President/Region 5 Director

Under the Flat Hat

Notes from PRAC President Matt Cerkel

In late March, I was contacted by members of Park Peace Officers Association of San Jose (PPOASJ), the association that represents the City of San Jose's peace officer park rangers, to help with an issue they are dealing with. The issue at hand is that, due to a growing criminal element in some of San Jose's parks, the rangers are requesting that the city arm them. The help I've provided includes contacting the mayor and city council to offer PRAC's help and insight into the issue. I supplied them with a list



of all the armed park ranger programs that fall under PC 830.31(b) and information about the 18-week Santa Rosa Law Enforcement Ranger Academy that the city's rangers attend in addition to the extensive firearms training that they already receive, and I explained how the rangers have already completed the peace officer hiring process and background checks. I pointed out that the City already arms the San Jose Fire District's Arson Investigators, who are peace officers under PC 830.37. The Arson Investigators only receive PC 832 Arrest and Firearms training, which is a 16-hour course. Finally, after hearing that the City was considering putting the rangers into the police department, I offered examples of how that hasn't panned out well in the long term for ranger programs. The City is going to conduct a study on the issue before making any decisions. I will continue to help whenever possible.

This leads me to the next subject. During the PRAC election last December, a survey on the current direction of PRAC went out to the members. Two of the nine responses received could be interpreted as being related to the issue in San Jose. One member stated the following: "proactive Park Ranger advocacy, no action or

advocacy usually until a program is about to be reduced or eliminated. Need to stop the loss of Ranger agencies and peace officer status.” Another member stated the following: “We should be taking positions on legislation, actions, and ordinances that affect the PRAC membership or parks in general. We need members to [know] they are welcome to speak up and the board will take action.” Taking these comments into consideration, I hope to make a presentation about the park ranger profession in California and the related requirements at the 2019 CPRS Conference. My presentation would focus on establishing park ranger programs and it would cover the following topics:

- Pertinent laws and required training
- What do you want your rangers to accomplish? (Generalist vs Specialist)
- Sources for training
- The PRAC ranger certification process
- Assistance and services PRAC can provide to park agencies

By presenting at the CPRS Conference, I hope to provide park agencies and administrators with much needed information about the park ranger profession. It may also be a great way to raise the stature of PRAC as a professional organization.

I also plan to develop a brochure largely based on the presentation. Once completed, the brochure could be sent out to agencies and decision makers and be used to address the problems that often occur when new programs are established. It would let agencies know what PRAC can do to assist them. Both the brochure and the presentation are direct forms of advocacy for the park ranger profession.

Finally, for advocacy to be effective, PRAC needs to be aware of issues. That takes member involvement. I commend PPOASJ for reaching out to PRAC and requesting assistance with their issue. California is a huge state and without our members being involved and keeping us informed of what is going on across the state, it is easy for park ranger issues to fall through the cracks. If you are aware of any issues that may impact the ranger profession please contact me at matt@calranger.org or your [regional director](#). Your involvement with park ranger advocacy is vital.

World Ranger Day

By Jewel Johnson, MRCA Supervising Ranger / International Ranger Federation Secretary

Would you risk your life for our planet's tomorrow?

It has been 22 years since the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) Executive Officer Joseph T. Edmiston came into my accounting office and asked me, "What do you think about being a Ranger?" Like most people, the image of Ranger Smith and Yogi Bear immediately came to my mind. As he went on to explain what a Ranger really did, I became intrigued, and, less than a year later, I began my career as an MRCA Generalist Ranger.



In 2006, I had the honor of attending my first World Ranger Congress in Stirling, Scotland. I met some of the most amazing people from every corner of the world, but, more importantly, it put what I did in its proper perspective. My patrol had me dealing with screaming soccer moms, bickering neighbors, and late night parties, talking with school groups, repairing trails, building signs, and fighting a few fires. I've been attacked once and almost run over twice by two of those soccer moms. I have also been fortunate enough to work for a supportive agency that provided proper and continuous training, necessary equipment, and fair compensation.

According to a recent survey by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Ranger Federation of Asia, most rangers have experienced a life-threatening situation at work. The threats may come from wildlife, poachers, hazardous working conditions, or even other members of their communities. Many of these men and women lack the training and equipment necessary to ensure their safety, and almost half of them see their loved ones fewer than five days per month. Thirty percent cited low pay as the worst aspect of their job.

The dictionary defines "lack" as "the state of being without or not having enough of something." If I am to take the headlines about the urgent need to protect environment seriously, then I have to ask why Rangers are lacking in so many areas.

The late conservationist and former International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Director General Dr Kenton Miller said the following about the importance of rangers: "The future of our ecosystem services and our heritage depends upon park rangers. With the rapidity at which the challenges to protected areas are both changing and increasing, there has never been more of a need for well-prepared human capacity to manage. Park rangers are the backbone of park management. They are on the ground. They work on the front line with scientists, visitors, and members of local communities."

World Ranger Day is celebrated worldwide on July 31st to commemorate Rangers killed or injured in the line of duty and to commemorate the work Rangers do to protect the planet's natural treasures and cultural heritage. It is an International Ranger Federation (IRF) initiative promoted together with its official charity arm, The Thin Green Line Foundation (TTGLF). World Ranger Day is fast approaching, and we'd love you to get involved and stand with the world's Rangers.

Let us honor the life and spirit of 25-year old Virunga National Park Ranger Rachel Katumwa, who died less than a month ago in an ambush while escorting park visitors. Rachel Katumwa was one of 26 female rangers working in Virunga National Park and, sadly, the first female ranger to lose her life in the line of duty.

Since July 31st, 2017, we have lost close to a hundred rangers worldwide. Regional representatives are still confirming details at this time. The IRF Roll of Honour (<http://www.internationalrangers.org/roll-of-honour/>) will be updated on World Ranger Day to include name and countries of rangers who lost their lives in the line of duty this past year.

We need to be diligent in supporting the lives of our fellow Rangers and remembering the spirit of our fallen brothers and sisters in the Ranger family.

On World Ranger Day we're asking PRAC members to stand with your fellow Rangers by:

1. Hosting an event
2. Posting on social media - post photos of yourself and others holding the World Ranger Day sign
3. Honoring Fallen Rangers by pausing for a moment
4. Raising funds for Ranger projects
5. Reaching out to fellow twin associations (as part of the IRF Twinning Program) and other Rangers

An e-pack will be available mid-June on this site:

<http://www.internationalrangers.org/world-ranger-day/>. It includes messages from The Thin Green Line Foundation (TTGLF) Ambassadors, promotional tools and instructions on how to register and host your event, as well as World Ranger Day Signs.

We encourage our members to get involved and make this year's World Ranger Day one to remember.

*Best Regards,
Jewel Johnson
Supervising Ranger, MRCA
Secretary, IRF*

If you have any questions, please contact, Louise Reynolds, the IRF Executive Officer: executiveofficer@internationalrangers.org.

New Faces of Rangering

By Aylara Odekova, Santa Clara County Park Ranger

When I am asked, “How did you become a park ranger?” I often find it hard to avoid the truism that there is not a single career path in this line of work. If there was, there would probably be many more of us. After all, the benefits of working in nature are immeasurable. So, how did the profession attract a young woman like me into its ranks?

My story begins in Año Nuevo State Park, where I came to see elephant seals one summer and ended up meeting the generous and courteous staff and volunteers. The volunteers intrigued me with their knowledge about the wildlife and the history of the park. Indeed, each of them participated in a 12-week training and mentoring program, which I ended up taking that fall. As I learned more about the park, I was also exposed to a variety of appealing career options.

After seven years working in event management, marketing, and fundraising in downtown San Francisco and Washington, DC, I was yearning to spend less time behind the computer and more time connecting with the world around me. I cherished every moment I spent as a Docent Naturalist at Año Nuevo State Park, and decided to switch careers. As I cued into rangering as a brand-new career option, I started meeting other women who were also interested. Together, we closely followed application deadlines, trained for physical agility exams, and prepped for backgrounds.





Ride-alongs gave me a huge confidence boost and solidified my goal of becoming a ranger. It was inspiring to meet Mount Tamalpais State Park Ranger Cecilia Rejas, discover that she too enjoyed martial arts, and to work alongside her for a day.

What followed was an arduous road towards acquiring full time work

in parks. With a bit of courage, I quit my full-time job with benefits and took on two seasonal jobs. I worked seven days a week and commuted for three hours each day for months but I couldn't be happier. I finally found my true purpose and the rest, as they say, is history.

It is all too fitting that, after graduating from the National Park Service Academy and beginning my career as a ranger in Joseph D. Grant County Park, one of first my responsibilities was to coordinate volunteer programs. Now, I finally have a chance to share my love for the profession with young people. In a world where children can recognize and name over 100 company logos and fewer than 10 plants, we desperately need to connect them to nature and help them navigate the world of park service careers.

Here is an example to illustrate the urgency of the situation. A year ago, I attended a recognition ceremony for 400 bright high school students who had just finished summer internships with various agencies around Santa Clara County, including the Department of Parks and Recreation. When it was my turn to speak in front of the crowd, I asked them to raise their hands if they had ever been to a park. Only a dozen people raised their hands. I was shocked and disheartened to see that so few young people spend time outdoors. It is my duty as a public servant to get them out to parks, to inspire them to enter a profession in park service, and to make sure that every hand is in the air next time the question is asked.

Nudity in California Parks: The Naked Truth about Clothing Optional

Beaches

By Jeff Price, Chief Ranger, California State Parks (Retired)

In 1979, I served as the Supervising Ranger at Torrey Pines State Reserve and Torrey Pines State Beach in northern San Diego County. The southern end of the state beach beyond “Bathtub Rock” (just below the blufftop Gliderport and UC San Diego) was locally called “Black’s Beach.” Black’s was a well-know and highly-visited unofficial nude beach that, as luck would have it, was part of my Ranger patrol responsibilities.



Before 1979, Rangers might occasionally issue a citation for nudity while on beach patrol, usually when visitors refused to comply with an order to leave the park and voluntarily walk a quarter-mile south to an unregulated public beach.

Some of the, “I gotta make a point about my rights,” people ended up being cited for violations of California Code of Regulation section 4322, Nudity, which says, “No person shall appear nude while in any unit except in authorized areas set aside for that purpose by the Department. The word nude as used herein means unclothed or in such a state of undress as to expose any part of portion of the pubic or anal region or genitalia of any person or any portion of the breast at or below the areola thereof of any female person.”

On weekend afternoons, many UC San Diego college coeds would drift down the trail from the campus dorms above to enjoy getting an overall tan. Every one of them quickly complied by moving off the state beach when contacted by patrol Rangers. Unfortunately, when the word spread to the nearby US Marine Corps (Oooh-rah) and US Navy training facilities, carloads of young military men were also attracted to Black’s Beach. We had a few issues with some over-exuberant and aggressive male behavior, but things went well for the most part because of an infrequent but regular Ranger presence.

Director Russ Cahill issued a memo to field staff in early 1979 with this language in part, “...therefore, it shall be the policy of the Department that enforcement of nude sunbathing regulations within the State Park System shall be made only upon the complaint of a private citizen. Citations or arrests shall be made only after attempts are made to elicit voluntary compliance with the regulations.”

These guidelines were commonly known by field Rangers as the “Cahill Policy.” Essentially, the new state policy was identical to what my Rangers were already doing at Black's Beach, so it was not a big change for us.

California Jury Instructions [CALJIC 16.220] use the crime of Indecent Exposure, absent some other state or local regulation. In order to prove this crime, each of the following elements must be proved:

[1] A person intentionally exposed private parts in a public place, or in any place where there were present other persons to be offended or annoyed; AND

[2] That person did so with the specific intent to direct public attention to genitals for the purpose of [his/her] own sexual arousal or gratification, or that of another, or of sexually insulting or offending others. Public attention to the anus, anal area, buttocks, pubic hair or a women's breast(s) are not to be considered in proving this crime.

Agencies need to be sure of the wording in their regulations. The San Francisco City Park Code [§4.01(h), Disorderly Conduct], contains a misplaced word that changes the meaning and enforceability of the law. SF Park Code §4.01(h) says, in part, “No person shall, in any park without permission of the Recreation and Park Department, expose his or her genitals, **public** area, buttocks...” It's just one letter different, but the word “*public*” means something entirely different from the word “*pubic*.” For research purposes, I checked the City Park Code language, and found it still misuses the word “public.” I'm curious why.



Several court cases attempted to force state parks to set aside clothing optional beaches, pointing to the law that says in part, “No person shall appear nude while in any unit except in authorized areas...” None have succeeded that I am aware of and, without a complaint, Rangers do not take any action.

During the public meeting process, it became clear that the those using state parks are extremely polarized on this issue, both for and against. How does your agency handle nudity? What local park regulations are in place?

Consider submitting your thoughts on this topic to the [Signpost Editor](#) so we can do a follow up article on how it is currently viewed in your agency or other jurisdictions.

"Getting to Know You": Santa Monica Mountain Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA)

By Richard Weiner, Region 4, Director

The MRCA was established by the California Legislature in 1980 to help preserve over 72,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings and improve more than 114 public recreation facilities throughout Southern California. The parks it includes stretch from the Hollywood Hills to Oxnard along the coast and highlands of the California coastline.



SMRA works with Federal, State, and local agencies to improve, protect, and restore the natural beauty of Southern California. MRCA manages parks in the Santa Monica Mountains, the Santa Susanas Mountains, the Verdugo Mountains, and along the Los Angeles River Recreation Zone.

On Wednesday, April 11, 2018, I went for a ride-along with Senior Ranger Jewel Johnson through some of the most pristine and beautiful areas in Southern California. The views from the mountains to the sea were spectacular. The trails in most parks are used by both hikers and bikers, except in some areas where restrictions are applied. The terrain was steep and, in some areas, very technical. Some trails go from sea level to an elevation of 1,700 feet, overlooking the ocean.

Here are some facts about MRCA.

1. Population Served- Approx. 10.7 million

2. Ranger program started- 1987
3. Number of Rangers – 23 (3 - 4 rangers per shift)
4. Total acres serviced – 75,000 acres
5. Largest Parks serviced – Scenic Mulholland Corridor, Franklin Canyon Park, Temescal Gateway, San Vicente Mountain Park
6. Basic Ranger Training required – Level 3 Reserve Academy, Wildfire Academy, Government Section 1031, Ability to carry a firearm, First Aid/CPR for the Professional Rescuer
7. Specialized Ranger Training – Swift Water Rescue, Low Angle Rope Rescue Operations, SAR, Tactical Communication, Detective School
8. Patrol Vehicles - (8) 4x4 trucks that can be equipped with fire suppression equipment and swift water equipment

The MRCA uses volunteers to assist with naturalist programs, park and trail maintenance and restoration, and mountain bike units. These volunteers assist the Rangers with eyes and ears in the open spaces to keep the parks and mountain area well-kept and looking pristine.

If you are interested in a "Getting to Know You" article highlighting your agency for the Signpost, please email the [newsletter editor](#).

GIS: Understanding the Basics

By George Durkee, GIS Instructor / Former NPS Backcountry Ranger

A map is not the territory it represents, but if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness.

Alfred Korzybski, 1931

Maps help us graphically visualize and summarize data in an easy to understand way. Putting individual incidents or other data on a map can reveal patterns or clusters you might otherwise miss. Such recognition might lead to mitigation efforts such as posting signs or providing handouts to visitors to increase awareness of a particular problem. For instance, you can show several years of MVAs (motor vehicle accidents), SARs (search and rescues), or resource violations on a map to better allocate patrol and staffing. During emergency response, maps can help show a SAR's progress, including deployment of teams and GPS tracklogs of areas searched, to help set priorities when planning each day's effort.

In the not-too-long-ago 'good old days' we drew a search map or kept track of incidents on a USGS paper map. For multi-day events, we'd use layers of acetate over the original map, marking each day's activity with a grease pencil. If a person wasn't found, or the search needed to be reviewed later, the entire bundle had to be brought out to review each day's progress and decisions.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the science of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) began to be adopted as a more organized way to gather and display location-based information. GIS software such as Google Earth or the more advanced ArcMap allow layers of data – e.g. buildings, roads, trails, lakes, base maps, etc. – to be stored separately and turned on or off on the map depending on what needs to be emphasized.

Over the next couple of issues of *The Signpost*, I will introduce – or refresh – several basic skills that can help us do our jobs better and more safely. The first and most important skill is the ability to accurately understand and use coordinate systems.

The Importance of Understanding Coordinate Systems

In June 2009, a PCT (Pacific Crest Trail) hiker activated her emergency beacon on her *SPOT* satellite communication device when she thought she was succumbing to hypothermia in a wet snow storm at 11,000 feet. That signal went to a satellite and then to the *GEOS* International Emergency Response Coordination Center (IERCC) in Texas. IERCC plotted the coordinates and called the Emergency Services office of the state involved, in this case, California. California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) then told IERCC which SAR agency was responsible for that area and gave them the contact.

The Sheriff's office in Inyo County received and plotted the coordinates, then sent two ground teams and a helicopter to the area. No one was found.

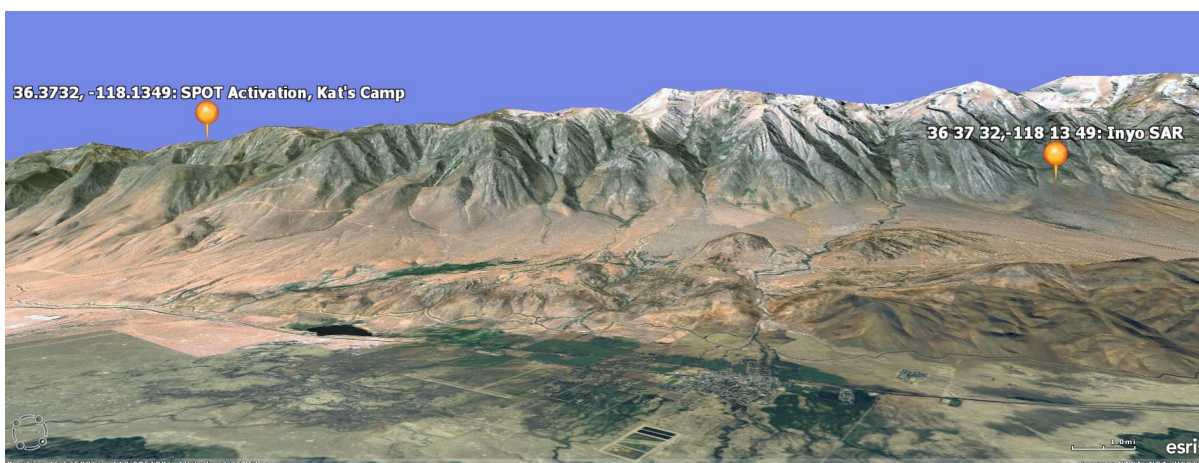


Figure 1: June 2009 south of Mt. Whitney. Subject's actual location to left and area of search to right. Notice coordinate number string are the same but, critically, coordinate type is not.

As it turned out, the hiker survived the night, and she walked out the next day after the sun came out. Inyo Sheriff's Office later discovered they were searching about 20 miles north of the actual emergency activation.

Out of geeky curiosity, John Dill (Yosemite Search and Rescue, aka YOSAR) and I followed up, analyzing the errors that were made to learn from the incident and avoid such potentially life-threatening mistakes in the future. One of our findings was that confusing coordinates was not at all rare. Almost every SAR team has similar stories.

In this instance, we identified several critical errors:

1. IERCC gave the correct string of coordinate numbers but did not specifically identify the coordinate type, which was Decimal Degrees (DD).
2. IERCC very likely read off the string of numbers using a pause where a "decimal" or "point" should have been. So: "Thirty-six <pause> three seven three two."
3. Inyo Sheriff's Office received and wrote down the correct string of coordinates but assumed Degree Minute Second (DMS) coordinate type, which they entered on their mapping software.
4. The error was probably compounded when the mapping software defaulted to separate boxes for Degrees Minutes and Seconds, which only reinforced what Inyo SO thought was the coordinate type. If they had chosen a different coordinate system on the software, a different entry form would have appeared. When the first location didn't make sense, they called IERCC and asked them to repeat the coordinates, but everyone just repeated their earlier mistakes, and the resulting location plot was off by 20 miles.
5. After talking to all parties involved, we figured out that the original coordinates were in Decimal Degrees and the Inyo assumed Degrees Minutes Seconds.
6. Oops.

Critical to any emergency response and to the ability to use and create maps is an understanding of coordinate systems and the ability to find a point when given coordinates or derive a location's coordinates from a geographic location. The good news is that GIS, software, apps, and a wide array of gizmos make this process much easier. The key is to develop a protocol that you always report coordinates and their type in the same way, and that you always ask for clarification if coordinates you receive are not reported in the expected format. From experience, I'd add that in almost all cases you will want to return to the primary source to double

check, and have the location sent by email to serve as a record and reference. It's actually a good practice to assume that coordinates you receive are wrong until confirmed.

As most of you know, there are a number of different coordinate types. Each offers advantages and disadvantages in how accurately they represent a place on the surface of the earth. All are a compromise depending on the level of distortion a user is willing to accept in distance, area, shape, or direction. Geographers and agencies use the type that best meets their needs. Here's a chart you can clip n' save covering the main coordinate types and who tends to use them. You can also try each coordinate type out on your mapping apps to see if you get Half Dome as a result.

Coordinate Type	Example	Common Users
	Latitude, longitude in NAD 1983 for Half Dome, Yosemite NP, CA	
Decimal Degrees (DD)	-119.533209165389, 37.7460574335916	SPOT, <u>GeoPro Messenger</u> (default), <u>OnSTAR</u> , 911
Degrees Minutes Seconds (DMS)	119°32'00"W, 37°44'46"N	Many SAR teams, USGS maps
Degrees Decimal Minutes or Decimal Minutes (DDM)	119°32.993059'W, 37°44.762237'N	Marine, Aviation
UTM, NAD 1983, Zone 11N (UTM) Often identified as x=longitude, y=latitude. Be careful to get XY order right when using Find command in software.	NAD 83: X (Long) = 276807.7666, Y (Lat) = 4180657.9635 NAD 27: X: 276802.2218 Y: 4180452.9768	Standard data format for most NPS areas and some SAR teams. Also standard for research data.
US National Grid (USNG)	11SKB7680980661	Now the standard for all federal SAR and emergency services agencies, though still in transition to adopt.

Figure 2: Examples of several coordinate types, formatting and users.

A second important variable in coordinates is the datum used. Datum is a standardized reference from which coordinate values are calculated. The most common you'll see and use are NAD 83, WGS 84 and NAD 27. Unless you need sub-meter accuracy, there's not much difference between NAD 83 and WGS 84. The difference between those and NAD 27, though, can be as much as ¼ miles along a N/S axis. Critically, many paper USGS maps use NAD 27. So, if you've established your location from reading a paper map, it's even more critical you include the datum in your report. The same is true if you're giving coordinates to a field team who are

relying on a paper map for navigation. Teams should practice converting coordinates and datum using their GPS or phone app.

The good news is it's not critical that the average ranger or responder understand the nuances of either datum or coordinate type. You just need to be sure coordinate type and datum are repeated accurately. You also need to practice with your software, apps, or GPS to be able to use them accurately every time. Converting among different coordinate types is an important skill to develop.

Finally, when reporting coordinates, you need to be clear. Whenever possible, follow up with a written record or e-mail and screen capture of the spot. When transmitting coordinates, whether by phone or radio, include a named geographic point nearby as an additional check. For instance;

"Team 1, my location using a GPS is UTM, zone 11 north at four zero seven one one four eight decimal (or point) seven two easting by three seven two six eight one decimal two seven northing. I'm on the north shore of Charlotte Lake."

Note that each number is read individually. Do not use combinations such as "forty seventy-one one forty-eight," which could cause confusion, and be sure to provide a named geographic location to use as a further reference check. When receiving coordinates, read them back to the sender. Ask for clarification, including what coordinate system and datum are being used as well as the source. Take no chances!

You can consult the following references should you want to learn more:

- This is a short video I did for one of my classes at Columbia College: [Understanding Coordinates](https://youtu.be/wRZrdZoiQ7U) (<https://youtu.be/wRZrdZoiQ7U>).
- Vanessa Glynn-Linaris and I have written a book: [Using GIS for Wildland Search and Rescue](http://www.mapsar.net/files/gis-for-wildland-search-and-rescue-ebook.pdf) (<http://www.mapsar.net/files/gis-for-wildland-search-and-rescue-ebook.pdf>), which is available as a free pdf download. For a more complete understanding of coordinates, I recommend reading Chapter 4: Understanding and Using Coordinate Systems. Although focused on search and rescue, our book is also a great introduction to maps and GIS.

I appreciate the opportunity *The Signpost* and PRAC have given me to spread the word advocating clearer protocols and integration of GIS into our park operations! I'm happy to help you develop your park or team's educational efforts and, especially, if you have an emerging incident on which you need immediate help. I'm part of a larger work group that's always available to assist teams with pre-planning or active incidents. You can contact me at gedurkee@sonic.net.

About the Author: George Durkee has been a seasonal backcountry law enforcement ranger for 47 years, serving in Yosemite, Sequoia, Kings Canyon, and Channel Islands National Parks. He now teaches GIS and Emergency Services to rangers in Yosemite and at Columbia College in Sonora, CA.

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Thanks for reading! Please [let us know](#) if you have ideas for what you would like to see in future issues of *The Signpost*.



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