

RESCUE OUR REGIONAL PARKS & OPEN SPACE

GRASS ROOTS WORKING GROUP

To Secure Adequate, Stable, Long Term Funding for Our Regional Parks and Open Space System

**FINAL REPORT OF THE
PUBLIC SAFETY & RESOURCE PROTECTION TASK FORCE**

December 29, 2010

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The Save the American River Association (SARA) supports the Grassroots Working Group. SARA has recognized that the threat to our Regional Parks and Open Space System posed by the ongoing County budget crisis is also a serious threat to the American River Parkway that cannot be mitigated by actions limited to the American River Parkway. SARA believes that the people, not a piecemeal process, should decide the future of the Regional Parks and Open Space System. If the people decide that they do not value the Regional Parks and Open Space System, the County can always proceed with divestiture of all or part of the Regional Parks and Open Space System.

The Grassroots Working Group has reviewed and discussed this report with the Task Force and concurs in the conclusions and recommendations set forth in the Report. Since public safety is involved and the Task Force consisted of experienced, professional law enforcement and ranger personnel, the Grassroots Working Group encourages Sacramento County to favorably consider the recommendations regarding the minimal service described in this report.

Report of the Public Safety & Resource Protection Task Force

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Report of the Public Safety & Resource Protection Task Force

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The Grassroots Working Group has been working since June 2010 to rescue our Regional Parks and Open Space System that is currently in the care and custody of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors. Since public safety and natural resource protection are responsibilities that are critical to rescue of our Regional Parks and Open Space System, the Grassroots Working Group formed the Public Safety & Resource Protection Task Force to review the existing practices of the County Department of Regional Parks park ranger services and to provide answers to the following two questions:

Why do we need a police force for the Regional Parks and Open Space System instead of relying upon the police services from the County and the individual cities?

What is the appropriate staffing and resources needed to provide a reasonable degree of public safety and resource protection for the entire Regional Park and Open Space System.

This report provides the answers to these questions as developed by the Public Safety and Resource Protection Task Force. This report was prepared by Mr. Matt Powers, MS, former Deputy Chief of Operations, Sacramento Police Department, and Mr. Dave Lydick, former Deputy Director of the Sacramento County Regional Parks Department. They were assisted by Mr. John Havicon, Park Ranger Supervisor, and Ms. Kathleen Utley, Park Ranger Supervisor.

Executive Summary

Need for Rangers: The Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks Ranger program is a necessary public asset as well a unique value. The same should hold true if an independent district is created. Unavoidable facts: public safety is costly, and; enforcement of the law cannot be contracted out to the private sector.

Requirements for Park Rangers include a four (4) year college degree, extensive training in resource management, as well as, public safety skills unique to open and wild spaces. With the exception of locally assigned California State Park Rangers, these same skills are not otherwise available. With over 15,000 acres of land under their supervision, the Park Ranger's unique combination of law enforcement and resource management skills are necessary attributes to ensure that both the public and the natural resources are protected.

As other law enforcement agencies (e.g. Sacramento County Sheriff, Sacramento City Police Department) have experienced cuts to staff, responsibilities previously referred to those agencies by Park Rangers, are now -- out of necessity -- being performed by Park

Rangers, despite drastic cuts to rangers as well. The result has been a dramatic shift in Park Ranger focus from proactive to reactive enforcement duties, requiring a commensurate reduction in resource management and protection responsibilities.

One critical area, where recent cuts are most obvious, is rapidly increasing problems associated with illegal camping. The elimination (in the Fiscal Year 2010/2011 County Budget) of the two Park Rangers previously assigned to this problem is a situation that cannot be ignored much longer without dire consequences for the users and natural resources of the Regional Parks and Open Space System. The American River Parkway, located in close proximity to the urban population centers of the County, has been especially hard hit by illegal camping and other crimes. This explains why approximately 70% of Park Ranger hours are spent in this area. Meanwhile, population growth is increasing the demand for access to all elements of the System. An examination of crime maps available from the Sacramento Sheriff's Department reveals serious urban crimes are occurring in close proximity to units of the System with increasing regularity. Further, the entire System is "porous", not regularly patrolled by Sheriff's Deputies, and not at all immune to these social problems.

That we have such a large and valued body of open space in the midst of urban Sacramento is a true regional treasure. Protecting that public treasure requires men and women skilled and dedicated to that specific purpose, and enough of them to protect both the users and the resources, including the resident wildlife.

Ranger Staffing - Minimal Service: Existing (i.e. FY 2010/2011) Ranger staffing is insufficient to provide a minimal level of public safety for users of the Regional Parks and Open Space System. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- (a) At a minimum, the current informal arrangement with other law enforcement agencies should be memorialized in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), especially in the instance when crimes initially reported or discovered by the Park Rangers evolve into complex investigations outside the scope of duties of Rangers to maximize the efficient use of the resources of both organizations.
- (b) Memoranda of Understanding should be established with volunteer and nonprofit organizations to provide a more formal structure for coordinating volunteer and nonprofit activities with needed nonemergency maintenance. The MOU for Management of Deer Creek Hills Preserve may serve as a model.
- (c) Two (2) FTE full time Park Rangers be restored to provide an Illegal Camping Detail for the entire System,
- (d) One (1) FTE full time Park Ranger be added for follow-up Investigations & Problem Oriented Policing responses to recurring issues,
- (e) A new Park Ranger Reserve Program be established to take advantage of the Park Ranger Program participation in the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) program.

A Park Ranger Reserve Program would provide low cost, uniformed, trained, augmentation of sworn Ranger personnel to (i) better meet service expectations of the public during peak demand times, holiday weekends for enforcement of the alcohol ban, and large special events and (ii) fill in for off duty full time Park Rangers. Additional vehicles, equipment, and training costs associated with the

Park Ranger Reserve Program will be encountered. Quantification of these costs is beyond the scope of this effort. However, experience with reserve programs in urban police departments shows that a Reserve Program should be a low cost option that would free up and augment sworn Rangers.

- (f) One (1) FTE full time Park Ranger be added to manage the new Park Ranger Reserve Program,
- (g) Two (2) FTE Park Rangers be added to provide more patrol services which would allow for a total of 11 FTE for routine Ranger Patrol Services, and
- (h) Add seasonal staff from the new Reserve Park Ranger Program to increase use of staff who earn seasonal pay rates with limited benefits.

While the above recommended minimal service level provides for a full time Ranger staff of eighteen (18) rangers plus seasonal/part-time Reserve Park Rangers and Park Ranger Assistants, this level of staffing provides only a minimal level of public safety and little or no resource protection. The minimal service level staffing will not allow for curbing the “broken window” activity that is increasing in severity and which will lead to further problems if not controlled. The minimal level of service should only be considered as a stopgap measure made necessary by the continuing County Budget crisis.

Ranger Staffing - Required Service: As the owner of the lands included in the Regional Parks and Open Space System, the County has the obligation to (a) provide the public with a reasonable degree of public safety while visiting the regional parks and open space system and (b), as stewards of the asset, preserve the natural resources and other assets contained within the System. The recommendations below are needed in order for the County, and any subsequent Special District that assumes the responsibility for the System, to meet this obligation to provide a reasonable degree of public safety and protection of natural resources.

- (a) Implement all recommendations described above for Minimal Service, and
- (b) Add an additional “team” of seven (7) rangers consisting of one (1) additional Park Ranger Supervisor and six (6) additional Park Rangers.

This is needed to restore service to the FY 2008/9 level (i.e. 25 total sworn Rangers) but in a different configuration, to wit: (a) add two (2) FTE Rangers to the investigations and Problem Oriented Policing services and also to augment illegal camping detail, (b) add one (1) FTE patrol ranger to the Delta and south county parklands, (c) add two (2) FTE patrol rangers to the North area parks, (d) add two (2) FTE patrol rangers to the American River Parkway, and (e) add one (1) FTE supervisor to provide for supervision Friday-Monday afternoons and nights until park closing is complete. These should allow increased ranger patrol time in underserved areas.

The purpose of the additional team of seven (7) rangers is to seriously attend to those violations throughout the entire System that adversely affect a person’s park and open space experience and that damage natural and cultural resources (e.g. dogs off leash chasing otters, other wildlife, and people, vagrants chopping down Elderberry bushes for tent poles and cooking sticks, litter control, vandalism, etc). This set of crimes has been identified as the “broken window” syndrome, which, if attended to, preempts other major offenses. Not attending to the “broken windows” has the opposite effect of

creating environments hospitable to occurrence of more serious crime and increased risk to natural and cultural resources.

The expectation by the public that the “broken window” crimes be controlled is highly reasonable. What is unreasonable is to believe that these expectations can be met by a Park Ranger program that has not been provided sufficient resources to enable even the minimal level of service described above. To do otherwise is magical thinking. Further, not providing the additional required resources puts at great risk the very viability of the Regional Park System as a place for human recreation, and seriously jeopardizes the natural resources it is intended to protect.

“Table 1 at the end of this report summarizes these recommendations for Required Service staffing and compares the number of sworn Rangers with approved prior Fiscal Year Ranger staffing and the Minimal Service staffing described earlier.”

1.0 Question No. 1: Need for Park Rangers

The following is in response to the first question regarding the necessity of Park Rangers. We first explain and elaborate on their duties, followed with description activities by park area.

The duties of Park Rangers are manifold, and except for other park ranger positions, no known law enforcement, fire, or private security personnel presently perform the array of activities for which Sacramento County Park Rangers are responsible. Their core sets of duties include: **law enforcement** (e.g. arrest, search, seizure, investigations, warrant preparation, court testimony); **public safety** (e.g. patrol, searching for lost persons, swift water rescue), **operations** (e.g. managing gate access, securing county restrooms, emergency repairs of park property), **resource management** (e.g. water resource protection, flora and wildlife management, protection of historic and anthropological properties), **interpretive services** (e.g. school and other public presentations), **maintenance** (e.g. removing hazards, righting downed fences), and a collection of **other duties** (e.g. training, administrative activities, clearing clogged culverts, restocking restrooms in the absence of other personnel).

The following information provides further background on these duties. It was collected in order to assess the need for park rangers, so as to determine if other staffing options are reasonable and less costly.

1.1 Law Enforcement

Park law enforcement is a primary duty of Rangers, so as to protect visitors and resources. The number of Rangers has decreased from a high of 25 full time employees (FTE) for the Rangers (FY 2008/9) to 14 (FTE) currently. The 8 (FTE) support seasonal staff has remained constant. What has not remained constant is an ever increasing number of park users, which has seriously strained the ability of our Rangers to fulfill their primary duty.

The level and type of law enforcement activity vary greatly by location. Rangers are spending more time than ever delivering reactive public safety services. Proactive service delivery has diminished, and is putting the parks at risk.

Rangers spend considerable time enforcing social laws due to the high volume of visitors recreating within the parks. The violations typically familiar within urban areas are becoming prevalent within the Regional parks. Rangers are handling fights and assaults, public drunkenness, increases in drug possession and related crimes, car burglaries and thefts, vandalism, a growing gang problem, arson and vagrancy. The parks are experiencing malicious mischief and defacing of park property (e.g. graffiti, public defecation, destruction of restrooms, defacing signage and interpretive panels) which detracts from the visitors' experience, costs the public agency (e.g. County) money to replace/repair, and is eating up an inordinate amount of Ranger time. Compounding the drain of Ranger time and resources is the ever growing problem of illegal public camping by displaced persons, such as the homeless, parolees and probationers, serious alcohol and drug users, the seriously mentally ill, and that not so rare combination of persons who meet all of these attributes at the same time.

Concurrently, Rangers continue to handle that collection of offenses that the public generally perceives as their core set of duties. These are the enforcement of minor violations which are clearly posted at the entrance to most facilities and for which the Park Ranger phone number is provided, e.g. traffic, parking, boating, leash laws, alcohol control laws, etc. The growing numbers of park visitors expect these laws to be enforced. Unfortunately, these expectations are too frequently unmet, as Ranger time has been largely consumed with the growing volume of more serious offenses such as car thefts, auto burglaries, assaults, and illegal camping by potentially dangerous persons. Public complaints regarding the minor offenses are growing, at the same time that Ranger resources have been slashed and diverted to more serious matters. This is causing frustration on the part of park patrons as evidenced by complaints.

Many of the local laws and ordinances are designed for the protection of the natural resources. Due to increased Park use, Rangers are spending more time doing resource enforcement, but in a reactive versus proactive manner. Such laws include: illegal dumping (sofas, beds, refrigerators), vehicles or bicycles in restricted areas, off leash dogs, broken bottles and trash left from unpermitted public gatherings, illegal campfires, unlicensed fishing and poaching, and encumbrance law violations – tree cutting, BMX jumps, rope swings, illegal gardens, marijuana grows, removal of vegetation and river rocks. Some of the more serious examples include removal of archeological artifacts (Miwok grinding stones), and destruction of historical sites (digging for Native American artifacts).

Education in the field of resource enforcement has decreased as other mandated law enforcement related obligations have grown, resulting in both less knowledge and less emphasis in resource enforcement. The culture of resource law enforcement has diminished as the culture of social law enforcement has grown. The need for both types of law enforcement remains.

With the downturn in the economy the historic ongoing problems with the homelessness has gotten worse. Whereas in the past the chronic homeless were an expected problem, families and more short term homeless persons have exacerbated this dilemma. Especially within the City of Sacramento, where there are local shelters and providers of services to the homeless and extreme low income persons. These are no doubt worthy

organizations, but their proximity to parkland creates serious problems. Persons denied a cot at a shelter due to overcrowding or behavioral problems migrate to the American River Parkway, and other remote areas. For instance when the County shuts the Cal Expo Shelter in the spring, Rangers are faced with an increased population of illegal campers. These same persons, while needy, are a source of annoyance to park patrons, and calls ensue.

Two more subtle but insidious park problems is the growing number of parolees to our county, and the presence of registered sexual offenders who cannot legally live near a park, school, or playgrounds per Megan's Law. On numerous occasions Rangers have interviewed these persons only to have them claim their parole agent directed them to our properties. When confronted about this issue, State corrections personnel neither confirm nor deny these claims. Many parolees, when checked, list as their permanent address Loaves and Fishes, which does not provide any overnight housing. This problem has been made worse by the growing number of released parolees to California counties due to federal court action which has mandated reducing the size of the prison population to meet civil rights guarantees.

Prior to budget cuts and in addition to two City of Sacramento police officers, two Rangers were assigned to an illegal camping detail. The detail would enforce the illegal camp laws and contact the occupants and have them remove their camps. Rangers directed these persons to social service providers. The camping detail issued citations for camping, drugs, alcohol, dogs off leash and littering. Frequently illegal campers would be arrested for more serious drug violations, warrants or being a parolee at large. The illegal camp detail was also involved in cleaning up the abandoned camp areas using the probation work crews to help with clean-up. Now illegal camp clean ups occur on an erratic basis, as staff time and the availability of Sheriff Inmate Work Crews permit.

Many of the persons found in illegal camps, and those contacted due to suspicious behavior have unique problems, both social and legal. Socially, many of the persons living along the American River Parkway have few alternatives they can access, or are willing to accept – accepting a shelter bed, acting appropriately, and working on their mental health and drug and alcohol issues. Plus, they frequently have collections of minor arrest warrants that require police action. But once arrested on a warrant for violations such a failure to appear in court, failure to pay a fine, riding light rail without a pass, illegal camping, etc. there are too frequently released by the County Jail staff. The problem of “misdemeanor anarchy” is a dilemma for which there is no immediate remedy, and the Rangers and other law enforcers will, and must, continue to stand in the gap by enforcing the law, making social service referrals when appropriate, and continuing to challenge anti-social and threatening behavior. When this occurs in the urban areas that are near and better policed than the parks and open space, continued migration to under policed park lands should be anticipated.

With law enforcement services decreases regionally, Rangers have found their sister agencies far less willing to provide follow-up investigation of crimes within the parks. Follow-up investigations of crimes such as burglary, theft, arson and assault within the parks are falling on the shoulders of the Rangers. This takes Rangers out of the parks, and forces them to work on developing investigations, writing warrant requests, interviewing victims, and preparing cases for court. Bear in mind that every bit of Regional park land and open space is within the boundaries of another jurisdiction, and their patrol district boundaries.

A recent example is a car burglary case that spiraled into an identity theft ring that involved victims in Sacramento, Placer and El Dorado counties. The case was hand carried to Sheriff's detectives; the detectives denied receipt due to their heavy caseloads, which resulted in a significant loss of park patrol time. This is but one of a growing number of such incidents.

1.2 Public Safety

Rangers are frequently involved in water rescues, searches for lost people, emergency first aid and brush fires. Due to their availability, as compared to other public safety agencies which are not assigned to the parks, Rangers are generally the first on scene of most incidents within the parks. Since many incidents are in remote hard to find locations, Rangers are provided first aid and CPR training beyond the required POST standards to handle most situations to stabilize the scene until additional rescuers arrive. Rangers are trained in swift water rescue as well as other search and rescue techniques. Rangers are the first responders, and rely on support of other agencies such as fire, police and sheriffs. Because of cuts experienced by the Sheriff and other agencies, we are now expected to prepare the related primary incident reports. Examples of this include missing person's reports, casualty reports, and property damage reports. This is time consuming, and again results in a loss of patrol time.

Since many of the public safety hazards involve the environment, such as wild fire, falling trees and flood waters, Rangers receive additional training to quickly handle situations and provide public safety. The rangers learn to use chainsaws and chainsaw safety. Some are trained to operate heavy equipment such as front loaders, backhoes and dump trucks.

There is presently no other fire/rescue or law enforcement agency similarly trained, resourced and organizationally committed to fulfill the public safety obligations provided by the Rangers.

1.3 Park Operations

Park operations, such as opening and closing parks, are a primary job duty for Rangers in the vast majority of parks. Rangers play an integral part of the day-use fees program. Rangers manage the seasonal staff involved in fee collection, and provide enforcement within the program when violations occur.

Special events, such as an "Eppies Great Race", the "Cinco de Mayo" concert, and multiple sporting/athletic events that require special closures, are overseen by Rangers who provide an operation plan for each event. Logistic planning of events helps organize the event, provide the needed public safety (e.g. confirming that the correct number of CHP, police or sheriff's deputies have been secured via contract), determines traffic patterns and crowd control, consideration of parking plans, managing the ingress and egress of the events, and assuring clean and safe restroom facilities.

Visitation has continued to rise (e.g. a 25% increase in ticket sales was experienced in the peak month of July 2010 compared to 2009).bringing more park users and with them related demands for Ranger services. With the addition of undeveloped county park land (i.e. Deer Creek Hills, Dry Creek Parkway) Rangers are now called upon to deal with

trespassing, destruction of fences, and matters that were previously private concerns. The net result of limited resources and higher demand has been that Rangers are now spending more time in the business of park operations, while many other expected and necessary service demands have increased.

1.4 Resource Management and Protection

The growing urban interface has created new and complex demands on Rangers in terms of resource management and protection. Rangers, with a unique and requisite background (a four year degree, and training education in natural resource management) are highly suited to assess and protect natural and cultural resources within the park system. Observations from field patrols contribute to the monitoring of resource conditions, and Rangers have the responsibility to remain diligent in resource protection. Rangers are presently involved in multiple special projects of this nature. Examples include: salmon spawning gravel enhancement, riparian land restoration, invasive plant management, and marking and signing natural hazards, and identifying and removing natural hazards.

With a large urban population surrounding the Parks and open space, Rangers are dealing with a growing number of complaints related to the interactions between wildlife and the public. Rangers' follow-up on a variety of wildlife reports including sick or injured animals, animals being aggressive or attacking, wild animals wandering into neighborhoods. Injured animals are many times captured and taken to animal rescue for rehabilitation. Gravely ill animals are dispatched and sometimes transported to the Fish & Game Laboratory to determine the illness.

Much concern is made when larger predators, such as mountain lions and bobcats, find their way into the parkway. In their natural habitat, their behavior is normal, but due to the aforementioned urban interface this is a growing problem for the Rangers. Sightings require investigation, assessment, and mitigation including: interviewing witnesses, closing park areas, capture and remove wildlife consistent with state and federal regulations. Rangers are the primary point of contact for the California Department of Fish and Game, and the federal trapper.

1.5 Interpretative Services

Schools and the general citizenry continue to make requests for presentations regarding the parks. Time for Rangers to provide high quality interpretive services has decreased over the years. The ability to prepare for and provide these services has diminished due to the demands of public safety and operations. Many Rangers find that it is very difficult to take themselves out of a busy operation for several hours to deliver interpretation, knowing that other areas are going untended during that time.

Interpretative services by Rangers are limited to (a) those provided during contacts with individual users initiated to correct observed inappropriate behavior and (b) services provided by individual Rangers on their own personal time. This is a lost opportunity, as getting the message out about our parks to school children and the general public is a proactive means to protect and enrich their use.

1.6 Maintenance

Rangers often find damaged facilities, post and cable, damaged or missing signs that if not taken care of allows for the potential of misuse or a violation to occur. Rangers carry tools to do quick repairs and prevent incidents from occurring. Rangers have been charged with posting and maintaining signs that include laws, ordinances or restrictions. Rangers develop a stewardship of the parks and are encouraged to assist maintenance in the repair of parks property.

1.7 “Other” Duties

These duties range from re-stocking toilet paper to unplugging culverts to pulling Invasive weeds to picking up litter. While not primary duties it is important that the “other” category be acknowledged as additional workload and a vital part of operating parks.

1.8 Ranger Activity by Area

Sacramento County’s Regional Parks cover a large amount of land, and is varied in its need for Park Ranger time and resources.

The **American River Parkway** currently consumes about **70%** of Park Ranger time. Where it interfaces with urban Sacramento County, the City of Sacramento and the City of Rancho Cordova there is a considerable amount of crime and social disorder. As already mentioned the homeless population is attracted to social service agencies in the urban area, and is comprised of a crime prone population. This is especially problematic in the area around Discovery Park and the Bike Trail that traverses the City of Sacramento. The Sacramento Police Department does regularly assign officers to this area, which is a no cost benefit to the County. Their focus, however, is on abating social disorder and crime that directly spills over into the businesses and neighborhoods that border the Parkway.

The community has multiple expectations of the Park Rangers which outstrip available Ranger resources. At a minimum the Park Rangers are expected to patrol the parkway. At the same time there are seasonal issues related to rafting on the river, increased use during the summer by bicyclists, runners, horseback riders, hikers, and the growing number of persons that use the parkway for picnics and general recreation.

Plus, there are special events that consume Park Ranger time, such as the Eppies Great Race, Cinco De Mayo at Discovery Park, Down River Days, and other similar events. When additional law enforcement is required, agencies other than the Park Rangers provide the requisite staff (Sacramento Police, Sacramento Sheriff Deputies, and CHP) at the expense of the sponsoring organization.

The **North Area Parks** include Gibson Ranch, Cherry Island Golf Course, Cherry Island Soccer Complex, Dry Creek Parkway, and the Elkhorn Boat Launch. This area currently accounts for about **10%** of Park Ranger time. Special issues include homeless camps, picnic disputes, thefts, vandalism, off road vehicles and illegal hunting.

The **East Area Parks** include Deer Creek Hills, Mather Regional Park, Gene Andal Park, Indian Stone Corral, and the park property along the Cosumnes River – especially near the bridge in Rancho Murrieta. This area currently accounts for **5 to 10%** of Park Ranger time. Special issues include illegal hunting and weapons violations, illegal camping, illegal off road vehicles, illegal dumping, and destruction of archeological sites.

The County's addition of undeveloped parkland has resulted in calls for service that were previously private matters. Calls of this nature are time consuming, and pull Park Rangers away from other duties with no available backups.

The **Delta** includes boat launches at Sherman Island and Hogback Island, the recreational areas of Cliff House and Georgianna Slough, the Jean Harvie Community Center, the Cosumnes River Preserve, and the Stone Lakes Wildlife Refuge. These are all large remote areas, and are experiencing increased calls for service. This area currently accounts for about **10%** of Park Ranger Time. A special issue for this area is that its remote nature and limited access points has attracted criminal use for marijuana grows, illegal hunting and fishing, off road vehicle use, auto burglaries in the parking lots, and illegal dumping. During the summer months this area experiences intense use by campers, boaters, fishing, and windsurfers.

1.9 Conclusions Regarding Question No. 1

1. The mission of the Park Rangers is complex, multifaceted, and cannot easily be replicated by any other public safety or law enforcement agency within Sacramento County.
2. It is unrealistic to “parcel out” their many jobs and contract for a combination of public and private personnel. When a Park Ranger patrols the American River Parkway, he or she is capable of monitoring and attending to the wide range of activities described above – all in one person.
3. The option of contracting with another public safety or law enforcement agency within Sacramento County was discussed. The Ranger responsibilities cannot be assumed by sheriff's deputies, municipal police officers, fire fighters, or any other such personnel without essentially retraining them to a level well in advance of their present set of duties and responsibilities. If the Park Rangers were to be lost as a human resource it would take considerable time and training to essentially duplicate them in others. The daily work performed by the Park Rangers is critical to the success of the Regional Parks.
4. A large regional park system requires public safety and resource protection. The current County of Sacramento methodology of meeting that need with Park Rangers is well suited to this need.
5. The current distribution of Ranger time among the North Area, East Area, Delta and American River Parkway reflects budget cuts over the recent past. Addition of Ranger staff should be accompanied by a re-evaluation of this distribution to address existing underserved areas.

2.0 Question No. 2: Staffing Needs & Options

We next addressed the second question asked of this task force:

What is the appropriate staffing and resources needed to provide a reasonable degree of public safety and resource protection for the entire Regional Parks and Open Space System?

The present number of calls for service, community expectations, and other external demands for Park Ranger time well exceeds present human resources. This is no doubt true for many County public safety agencies, but is especially problematic for a small agency which has been further burdened by increased park use, the growing effect of calls for service to undeveloped parkland, and no clear agreement with other potential public safety agencies which might reduce demands for Park Ranger time.

For instance, while there is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Sheriff's Dispatch, there are no other current formal agreements with other public safety agencies to identify, quantify and clarify their roles relative to the Regional Park system. In many instances there are concurrent jurisdictional issues that too frequently result in the Park Rangers being the default agency for expending time and resources (e.g. Sacramento Sheriffs, Sacramento Police, California Department of Fish and Game, Rancho Cordova Police, Elk Grove Police).

What does exist is an unwritten operational practice of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department handling major crimes that occur within the Regional Park system in the unincorporated area. This would include major felonies such as homicide, rape, sexual assaults, and some assistance with armed robberies, serious aggravated assaults, and similar crimes of violence. This unwritten practice is essentially the same within the City of Sacramento, and other municipalities within the County of Sacramento Regional Park property. The one significant exception is Elk Grove Regional Park, which is fully policed by the Elk Grove Police Department as a result of a long term agreement (Community Services District).

There are many other instances in which the Park Rangers have overlapping enforcement responsibilities. The California Department of Fish and Game and Park Rangers jointly enforce fishing and hunting codes within the Regional Park system. Threats and damage to the natural environment can have county, state and federal agencies collectively involved in related investigations. These overlapping and potentially competing interests must be clarified.

As previously mentioned, the Park Rangers unit at one time had a high of 25 FTE for full time staff, and 8 FTE for seasonal staff. Due to budget cuts, there are presently (i.e. FY 2010/2011) fourteen (14) FTE for full time Park Rangers. Two (2) of these FTE are funded by other agencies for contract patrol services and three (3) of these FTE are for one (1) Chief Ranger and two (2) Ranger Supervisors leaving a total of 9 FTE sworn Rangers available for full time Ranger patrol in the entire Regional Parks and Open Space System. Consequently, Ranger patrol staff are left with very little time for proactive patrol and the time necessary to adequately respond to the current and growing demands they face. This is resulting in community dissatisfaction.

Another instance where a formalized arrangement could improve efficient use of Ranger personnel is better coordination with volunteer and nonprofit groups that are associated with individual regional parks and open space units. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Ranger Program and the individual groups would provide an organized framework for the Rangers to refer to the volunteer and nonprofit groups, specific non-emergency maintenance and resource protection needs that Rangers observe in the field. This would enable volunteer and nonprofit groups to consider these needs and in planning their activities and could enable Rangers to address other issues.

2.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed with the intent of effectively meeting the public safety and resource protection needs of the existing Regional Parks system into the near future. Without major additions or changes to dormant park lands, the near future is anticipated to include increased park use, and greater park and urban interface as the population of Sacramento grows.

2.1.1 Recommendations Regarding Minimal Service

1. At a minimum, the current informal arrangement with other law enforcement agencies should be memorialized into an agreement, especially in the instance when crimes initially reported or discovered by the Park Rangers evolve into complex investigations well outside their scope of duties. MOU's with all concurrent jurisdiction law enforcement agencies should maximize the efficient use of both organizations resources.

This will be a difficult undertaking. However, it is necessary so as to bring order, consistency and predictability in the provision of general public safety and the protection of park resources. Though not directly related to park safety, the Cooperative Management Agreement that supports the Cosumnes River Preserve (which created a partnership of 9 separate agencies) may serve as a model for identifying roles and responsibilities of enforcement agencies.

2. Memoranda of Understanding should be established with volunteer and nonprofit organizations to provide a more formal structure for coordinating volunteer and nonprofit activities with needed nonemergency maintenance. The Memorandum of Understanding for the Management of the Deer Creek Hills Preserve may serve as a model.
3. To immediately improve service delivery, handle calls for service, and provide bare minimum public safety and natural resources protection, the following are recommended additions to the FY 10/11 staffing allocation:
 - (a) Add 2 FTE full time Park Rangers for Illegal Camping Detail.
These two (2) FTE Rangers would be permanently assigned to resume the illegal camping detail for the entire system. This would provide immediate relief sufficient to free up existing Park Ranger time for patrol use elsewhere.

- (b) Add 1 FTE full time Park Ranger for Investigations & Problem Oriented Policing.

This one (1) FTE Ranger would be assigned to conduct follow-up criminal investigations, and develop Problem Oriented Police responses to recurring issues. This Park Ranger would also provide back fill staffing for off duty Park Rangers on an as needed basis.

- (c) Establish a new Park Ranger Reserve Program.

A Park Ranger Reserve Program would take advantage of the Park Rangers recent inclusion in the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) organizational certification. A reserve program is a very low cost, but high impact means to augment existing Park Rangers during peak use, holiday weekends for enforcement of the alcohol ban, and large special events. Additional vehicles, equipment, and training costs associated with the Park Ranger Reserve Program will be encountered. Quantification of these costs is beyond the scope of this effort. However, experience with reserve programs in urban police departments shows that a Reserve Program should be a low cost option that would free up and augment sworn Rangers.

- (d) Add 1 FTE full time Park Ranger to manage a new Park Ranger Reserve Program.

This Park Ranger would oversee development and management of a Reserve Park Ranger program. This Park Ranger would also provide back fill staffing for off duty. It may be appropriate for this position to be a Park Ranger Supervisor, which would also provide additional supervision in the field during the long days of daylight savings time.

- (e) Add seasonal staff from the new Reserve Park Ranger Program. This would increase seasonal Ranger staff, in addition to the Park Ranger Assistant positions, who work at seasonal pay rates with limited benefits. The Reserve Park Rangers addition would be a tremendous benefit in better meeting service expectations during peak demand times, holiday weekends and large special events. These Reserve Park Rangers would also fill in for off duty full time Park Rangers.

- (f) Add 2 FTE full time Park Rangers to provide patrol services

This addition will allow a total of 11 FTE for routine Ranger Patrol services.

Under this Minimum Service level for the existing Regional Parks and Open Space System, the eighteen (18) total sworn Ranger staff would be assigned as follows: One (1) Chief Ranger, Two (2) Park Ranger Supervisors, Two (2) Park Rangers to work illegal camping, One (1) Park Ranger for following investigations, Problem Oriented Policing, and backfill, One (1) Park Ranger to supervise the Park Ranger Reserve Program, and other part time staff, Eleven (11) Park Rangers for full time routine patrol and part-time Reserve Park Rangers and Park Ranger Assistants during peak use periods and for large special events.

Table 1 at the end of this report summarizes this recommendation and compares the number of sworn Rangers with approved prior Fiscal Year Ranger staffing.

Anticipated Results for Minimal Service Staffing: For the eleven Park Rangers assigned to patrol, the basic deliverable would be three (3) Rangers on patrol in the East, Delta and North area. Of those three, one would serve in the Delta and the remaining two would overlap covering the East and North areas with an emphasis on the North. The remaining eight (8) Rangers would patrol the American River Parkway. A combination of Reserve Rangers and full time back fill staff would assure coverage when Rangers are off duty. In each area there would be routine patrol of the major bikeways, paths, roadway and bike trails, and patrol of connected parking lots, boat ramps, etc.

While the recommended minimal service level provides for full time Ranger staff of eighteen (18) rangers plus seasonal/part-time Reserve Park Rangers and Park Ranger Assistants, this level of staffing provides only a minimal level of public safety and resource protection service. The minimal service level of staffing will not allow for curbing the “broken window” activity that is increasing in severity and which will lead to further problems if not controlled. The minimal level of service should only be considered as a stopgap measure made necessary by the continuing County Budget crisis.

2.1.2 Recommendations Regarding Required Service

As the owner of the lands included in the Regional Parks system, the County has the obligation and given its commitment to (a) provide the public with a reasonable degree of public safety while visiting the regional parks and open space system and (b) preserve the natural resources and other assets contained within the System. The recommendations which follow are needed in order for the County, and any subsequent Special District that assumes the responsibility for the System, to meet this obligation.

1. Implement all recommendations described above under “Recommendations Regarding Minimal Service”.
2. Add an additional “team” of seven rangers, 1 additional Park Ranger Supervisor and 6 additional Park Rangers.

This additional “team” would restore service to the FY 2008/9 level (i.e. 25 total sworn Rangers) but in a different configuration. The purpose would be to seriously attend to those violations in the entire system that adversely affect a person’s park experience and damage natural and cultural resources (e.g. dogs off leash chasing otters, other wildlife, and people, vagrants chopping down Elderberry bushes for tent poles and cooking sticks, litter control, vandalism, etc). This set of crimes has been identified as the “broken window” syndrome, which, if attended to, preempts other major offenses. Not attending to the “broken windows”, has the opposite effect of creating environments sadly hospitable to more serious crime and risk to park natural and cultural resources.

The expectation that the “broken window” crimes be controlled is highly reasonable. What is unreasonable is to believe that these expectations can be met by a Park Ranger program that has not been provided sufficient resources to provide even the minimal level of service described above. To do otherwise is magical thinking. Further, not providing the additional required resources

described in this section puts at great risk the very viability of the Regional Park System as a place for human recreation, and seriously jeopardizes the natural resources it is intended to protect.

Anticipated Results for Required Service Staffing: The “team” of seven park rangers would be dispersed in the following manner in addition to the Minimum Service Model: (a) Add 1 FTE Ranger to the investigations and Problem Oriented Policing; and also to augment illegal camping detail, (b) Add 1 FTE patrol ranger to the Delta and south county parklands, (c) Add 2 FTE patrol rangers to the North area parks, (d) Add 2 patrol rangers to the American River Parkway, and (e) Add 1 supervisor to provide for supervision Friday-Monday afternoons and nights until park closing is complete. In summary, these additions should allow for increased ranger patrol time in the underserved areas.

Table 1 at the end of this report summarizes these recommendations for Required Service staffing and compares the number of sworn Rangers with approved prior Fiscal Year Ranger staffing and the Minimal Service staffing described earlier.

2.2 Park Ranger Position is a Real Value

In reaching the above conclusions and recommendations, the Public Safety and Resource Protection Task Force considered the cost of a Park Ranger in comparison with other public safety positions.

At top step the annual salary of a Park Ranger is \$57,879. As of April 2010, the County Department of Regional Parks reports that the total annual cost (i.e. salary, benefits, equipment, training, vehicles, Workers Compensation Insurance, Unemployment Insurance and other miscellaneous costs) of a Park Ranger at the top step of the salary range is \$125,900.

The County Budget Office reports that the annual salary of a Sacramento County Deputy Sheriff at the top step is \$85,000 and the total annual cost (i.e. salary, benefits, equipment, training, vehicles and other miscellaneous costs) is \$179,200. The Sacramento Bee, on March 31, 2010 in an editorial (“RT service cuts are a brutal blow”) reported that the Regional Transit District pays about \$172,000 for one sworn County Deputy Sheriff and about \$128,000 for a since Sacramento City Police officer.

For the California Department of Parks, the annual salary of a State Park Ranger is about \$63,000.

While there may have been some renegotiation of labor agreements that may affect the above costs, there is no known police officer position in Sacramento County that is less in salary than that of the Park Rangers. Further, while it may be tempting to consider hiring private security guards instead of Rangers, it must be remembered that private security guards cannot be contracted to provide law enforcement services.

Respectfully submitted,

Public Safety & Resource Protection Task Force

Table No. 1

Ranger Staffing Summary

29-Dec-10

Minimum Service Level					
Ranger Classification	FY 2008/2009 Approved (1)	FY 2010/2011 Approved (1)	Number of Rangers	Change from FY 2008/09	Change From FY 2010/2011
Patrol Rangers	20	9	11	-9	2
Contract Rangers	2	2	0	-2	-2
Ranger Manager	1	1	1	0	0
Ranger Supervisors	2	2	2	0	0
Illegal Camping Detail			2	2	2
Investigations & POP Officer			1	1	1
Ranger Reserve Program			1	1	1
Total Number of Rangers	25	14	18	-7	4

Required Service Level						
Ranger Classification	FY 2008/2009 Approved (1)	FY 2010/2011 Approved (1)	Number of Rangers	Change from FY 2008/09	Change From FY 2010/2011	Change from Minimum Service
Patrol Rangers	20	9	16	-3	8	6
Contract Rangers	2	2	0	-2	-2	0
Ranger Manager	1	1	1	0	0	0
Ranger Supervisors	2	2	3	1	1	1
Illegal Camping Detail			2.5	2	2	0
Investigations & POP Officer			1.5	1	1	0
Ranger Reserve Program			1	1	1	0
Total Number of Rangers	25	14	25	0	11	7

(1) As authorized by the County Board of Supervisors in the approved budget