



# County of Santa Cruz 0221

## PARKS, OPEN SPACE & CULTURAL SERVICES

979 17th AVENUE, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95062

(831) 454-7900 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD: (831) 454-7978

BARRY C. SAMUEL, DIRECTOR

February 14, 2002

**AGENDA: February 26, 2002**

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz

701 Ocean Street

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

### SUBJECT: **PARK RANGER PATROL**

Dear Members of the Board:

On June 26, 2001, your Board directed the Parks Department to return with an analysis of the viability of creating a Santa Cruz County Park Ranger program. As early as 1991, the Parks Department and the Board have had intermittent discussions about the viability of an ongoing County Park Ranger Program. Several interim plans have been instituted, including using private security companies and, most recently, the use of Deputy Sheriffs assigned to the Parks Department.

### **Park Ranger Programs - The Role of Peace Officers and Public Officers**

Park Ranger programs are developed to fill a specific departmental role. There are four basic duties performed by Park Rangers: enforcement, resource protection, facility maintenance, and administration. The type of park ranger program adopted by a community is based on the needs of the department, the size and priorities of the community and the nature of its park resources.

The level of enforcement authority afforded the Park Ranger is the key to determining their role as the official presence in the parks. It is important to note that peace officer status should apply only to Sheriffs Deputies and Police Officers. A County Parks program using its own Rangers (public

*The Mission of the Santa Cruz County Department of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services is to provide safe, well designed and maintained parks and a wide variety of recreational and cultural opportunities for our diverse community*

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
PARK RANGER PATROL**

**Page 2**

**AGENDA: February 26, 2002  
February 14, 2002**

officers) would need to be designed such that it would not encroach on the jurisdictional authority of the Sheriff's Department.

The authority and duties of a peace officer and public officer vary greatly. Peace officers are given broad lawful authority and may detain suspected felons, search for contraband and make arrests. Public officers are generally public employees who can enforce municipal codes within a very narrow scope. Like peace officers, they are able to issue citations for park-code violations but cannot detain individuals longer than necessary to complete a reasonable contact and cannot make arrests.

The following hypothetical situation is presented to provide an example of how a parks ranger program employing a public officer functions in comparison to one using a peace officer.

**SITUATION:** *The ranger observes two men seated in an automobile at a county park. The driver is observed throwing an empty beer bottle onto the grass next to the vehicle.*

1. **Public officer.** The Park Ranger can make contact with the driver and cite him for littering – a violation of a park ordinance. If the Ranger can plainly observe an open container of beer in the car, a cite for possession of alcohol in the park might be issued. The Ranger cannot legally search the vehicle for additional contraband or check the occupants for weapons. The occupants can be detained only long enough to reasonably complete the citation process.
2. **Peace officer.** The Park Deputy may check the vehicle license for being wanted or stolen. The occupants must provide identification and can be checked for criminal history. Based on the observation of the beer bottle thrown from the driver's window and smelling of beer, the Park Deputy can examine the vehicle for more contraband and search the occupants for weapons and make an arrest if circumstances so warrant.

**Types of Park Ranger Programs**

Parks staff researched park ranger programs in other cities and counties to determine how issues relating to enforcement, resource protection, maintenance and administration were addressed in other communities.

The majority of municipalities address most of their maintenance and administrative needs with regular parks staff. Park Ranger programs are generally considered when resource protection, trail maintenance, interpretive services, and larger operational issues such as overnight camping become a significant focus of the program. All public park agencies rely on either the local sheriff or police authority to address enforcement issues. After reviewing the programs of various parks departments, several were selected to illustrate three models that typify how Park Ranger activities, including enforcement functions, are addressed in other communities, thus providing a basis for evaluating our own options.

**Ongoing Ranger Program: Enforcement Services Provided as Needed**

The City of Santa Cruz has a ranger program that employs Park Rangers who serve as public officers. This is a fairly recent change that was implemented because the City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department wanted to refocus the activities of their Rangers to include interpretation, resource protection, and trail maintenance. The Park Rangers work primarily at Loch Lomond Reservoir and the Pogonip. Their duties also include fee collections, maintenance, and visitor services. City of Santa Cruz Police provide law enforcement in the city parks. Police are not specifically assigned to park sites but are called upon when needed. This option works well for the City of Santa Cruz because of their focus on typical Park Ranger services and because enforcement services on an as-needed basis provides adequate coverage for the relatively small geographic area.

**Ongoing Ranger Program: Ongoing Enforcement Services Assigned to Parks**

The County of Monterey has a Park Ranger Program in which they use both Deputy Sheriffs and County Park Rangers. The Monterey County Rangers are not peace officers, but public officers. As described above, public officers have limited enforcement authority. Additionally, Monterey County Parks has two Sheriffs Deputies assigned to the Parks Department on a permanent basis to provide for law enforcement in the parks. The Deputies and the Rangers work primarily at Lake San Antonio County Park. The combination of Rangers and peace officers is successful in Monterey because Lake San Antonio has a large volume of day-use visitors and overnight camping. The lake environment necessitates constant interaction with park users to promote safe boating and responsible use of alcohol. The Rangers collect entrance fees, inform park visitors of rules and regulations, provide campground maintenance, and occasionally issue citations for park-rule violations. Serious law enforcement issues are referred to the Sheriffs Deputies on duty, who are in constant radio communication with the Rangers. According to the Chief Ranger, approximately 30 percent of their time is spent on visitor issues related to enforcement and the remainder of their time is spent on fee collection, litter pickup, and campground maintenance.

Similarly, Santa Clara County has both Park Rangers and Deputy Sheriffs assigned to the Parks Department for law enforcement in county parks. Again, this approach works well in Santa Clara County because the Sheriff Deputies work in conjunction with the Parks staff at the three water-recreation areas under their jurisdiction. The Park Rangers collect fees, provide interpretive walks, and write citations. They carry pepper spray and patrol the parks on both land and water to inform people of rules and regulations. Santa Clara Rangers do limited maintenance work in the "off season." The Deputy Sheriffs are regularly in contact with the Park Rangers and provide needed enforcement, emergency response, and arrests. Most law-enforcement issues are related to alcohol and boating violations. Additionally, Santa Clara County Parks has overnight camping with Park Rangers on-site to collect fees, assign campsites, and oversee the campgrounds.

**No Ranger Program: Enforcement Assigned During Peak Season**

Fresno County does not have designated Park Ranger positions; hence, enforcement is provided by the local Deputy Sheriffs. While the Deputies are not directly assigned to the Parks Department,

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
PARK RANGER PATROL****Page 4****AGENDA: February 26, 2002  
February 14, 2002**

they work closely with parks staff and provide up to eight deputies to be stationed at three of their water- recreation areas. The Parks Department and the Sheriffs Department have developed a working relationship over the past five years providing regular Deputies to be stationed at active County Park sites during the peak season. This relationship has resulted in additional Sheriffs Deputies being added to the Sheriffs Department to insure that the enforcement needs of these parks are met. Additionally, the Sheriffs Department works with the Parks Department to staff large special events and provides extra park patrols at the request of the Parks Department. This arrangement works well in Fresno because the city does not need typical Ranger services, such as trail maintenance and overnight camping administration, but does need dedicated enforcement services during the summer months.

**Recommended Park Ranger Program for Santa Cruz County**

The County of Santa Cruz does not need typical Park Ranger services related to trail maintenance, interpretive services, overnight camping and water sports. Our parks system does need the dedicated enforcement services of peace officers to patrol a large geographic area. With this in mind, we have crafted a very successful program tailored to meet the specific needs of our community.

The County of Santa Cruz Parks Department uses two Deputies, assigned by the Sheriffs Office, to patrol County parks and beaches. The day-to-day management of the program is the responsibility of the Parks Department since they are best able to determine the department's daily needs. The Sheriffs Office handles hiring, training, equipment, communication and is able to provide "back-up" coverage for the assigned Deputies as needed. The attached Parks Patrol Program report (on file with the Clerk of the Board) was developed by the Sheriffs Office and provides details of the current partnership between the Parks Department and the Sheriffs Office.

Santa Cruz County's use of Deputies (peace officers) as Park Rangers results in higher program costs than if the program employed public officers. The attached table shows the comparative costs of Deputies and Park Rangers associated with the park programs referenced in this letter. In Santa Cruz County, it is estimated that the annual cost difference in salary between a Deputy and a Park Ranger would be approximately **\$17,844**. (This comparison does not take into account the costs for training and equipment that would need to be assumed by the Parks Department were a Parks Ranger program with public officers implemented).

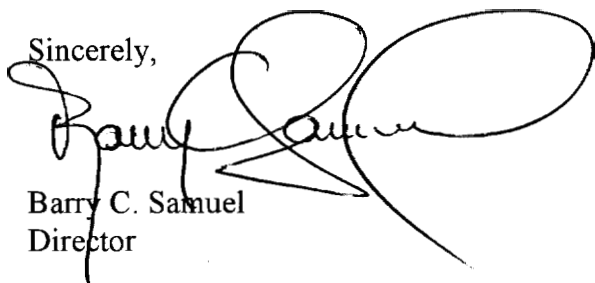
Although the costs of a Ranger Program employing Deputies are higher, the benefits provided by such a program are well worth the difference. The mere presence of the Deputies in park facilities and at events hosted in County parks is invaluable. The Deputies assigned to the Parks Department and the inherent "back-up" support provided by the Sheriffs Office ensure a high level of enforcement throughout our park system with a large geographic area. The Deputies are extremely effective in educating visitors regarding the regulations that govern the use of local parks and beaches. They also provide the authority, when needed, to fully enforce ordinances related to alcohol, use of park sites after-hours, and similar activities. Furthermore, because of their overall role in the community, the assigned Deputies are familiar with not only the specific park sites that they patrol but also with the adjacent neighborhoods and residents.

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
PARK RANGER PATROL****Page 5****AGENDA: February 26, 2002  
February 14, 2002**

After reviewing a variety of Park Ranger programs in other communities, it appears that the most effective means of providing park patrol services in Santa Cruz County is to continue with the already-established and successful relationship that exists between County Parks and the Sheriff's Office.

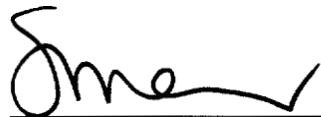
It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Board accept and file this report.

Sincerely,



Barry C. Samuel  
Director

RECOMMENDED:



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO  
County Administrative Officer

cc: Auditor/Controller, County Counsel, CAO, Sheriff, Parks  
BCS/mgi/cms

Attachments: A-Comparison Chart  
B-Sheriff's Parks Patrol Program Report  
(On file with the Clerk of the Board)

Exhibit 1  
Comparison of Deputy Sheriff versus Park Rangers

Position	Salary Range	Enforcement Authority	Duties
<u>Deputy Sheriff</u> County of Santa Cruz	\$3931 to \$5237	Peace Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enforcement</li> <li>■ Patrol</li> <li>■ Staff Events</li> </ul>
<u>Ranger</u> City of Santa Cruz	\$2665 to \$3750	Public Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fee Collection</li> <li>■ Maintenance</li> <li>■ Issue Citation</li> <li>■ Interpretation</li> </ul>
<u>Deputy Sheriff</u> Santa Clara County	\$4951 to \$6018	Peace Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enforcement</li> <li>■ Patrol</li> <li>■ Emergency Response</li> </ul>
<u>Ranger</u> Santa Clara County	\$3961 to \$4792	Public Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fee Collection</li> <li>□ Maintenance</li> <li>■ Citations</li> <li>■ Interpretation</li> <li>■ Water Safety</li> <li>□ Boat Patrol</li> </ul>
<u>Sheriff Deputy</u> Monterey County	\$3743 to \$4869	Peace Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enforcement</li> <li>□ Patrol</li> <li>■ Emergency Response</li> </ul>
<u>Ranger</u> Monterey County	\$2502 to \$3254	Public Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fee Collection</li> <li>■ Maintenance</li> <li>■ Issue Citation</li> <li>■ Water Safety</li> </ul>
<u>Sheriff Deputy</u> Fresno County	\$3371 to \$4851	Peace Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enforcement</li> <li>■ Patrol</li> <li>■ Emergency Response</li> </ul>