



Memorandum

TO: PUBLIC SAFETY, FINANCE
& STRATEGIC SUPPORT
COMMITTEE

FROM: Jon Cicirelli

SUBJECT: PARK RANGER PROGRAM
ANNUAL REPORT

DATE: March 14, 2019

Approved

Greg A. Maguire

Date

3-14-19

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the 2018 Annual Report on the Park Ranger Program.

OUTCOME

This report will provide the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support (PSFSS) Committee with an update on the Park Ranger Program's 2018 highlights, including volunteer activities, park ranger reorganization and staffing levels, Park Ranger Program highlights and honors, Working Group outcomes, and the Park Ranger Program 2019 Work Plan.

BACKGROUND

The City of San José's Park Ranger Program is an integral part of the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS). The program's mission is to provide a safe, enjoyable park experience by protecting and educating the public, providing recreational opportunities, and protecting, preserving, and enhancing the natural and cultural resources of the City's parks, trails, and open spaces.

The Park Ranger Program has its roots in resource and visitor protection. The City established the Park Ranger Unit in 1972 after a period in the 1960s and early 1970s when San José's park system expanded rapidly and crime and vandalism were deterring residents from using parks. A community task force convened to address crime issues at Alum Rock Park and other neighborhood parks and resulted in the recommendation of adding Park Rangers.

Over the course of the program's 47-year history, San José Park Rangers have worked to ensure a safe and enjoyable atmosphere in City parks. Park Rangers assist park users, provide

information on appropriate park use, and educate visitors on park rules and procedures. As public safety officers, Park Rangers also render emergency medical care, conduct search and rescue operations, and perform wildland fire prevention patrols as well as provide initial wildland fire suppression. As stewards of the City's natural and cultural resources, Park Rangers work to protect and monitor park lands, restore native vegetation, maintain rustic hiking trails, and educate the public on the cultural and natural history of San Jose. Park Rangers also maintain safety and security in our neighborhood parks and along trails.

ANALYSIS

Volunteer Activities

Park Rangers continue to work closely with a number of volunteer, community, and educational institutions to make park and resource improvements within City of San José parks and open spaces. Improvements have included trail work at Alum Rock Park, the removal of 183 tons of trash from the Coyote Creek (compared to 24 tons in 2017), and the provision of interpretive and docent services in Kelley Park and the Japanese Friendship Gardens. Volunteers have also been building and donating benches and other park improvements in a number of regional and neighborhood parks. Volunteers from West Valley College Park Management and Archeology programs continued to work on the remains of a historic structure in Alum Rock Park that was exposed by the Lariat Fire. The project has elicited positive media coverage and, as a result of the media exposure, project staff were contacted by the Lundy family, the historical owners of the structure. Under the direction of Andrew Kindon PhD, Chair of the Anthropology Department at West Valley College, students continue to conduct historic research, including interviewing the Lundy family and curating collected items that included bricks and door knobs, to be returned to Alum Rock Park for future interpretive use.

The chart below shows the volume of volunteer activity in 2018 that supports Park Rangers at the various regional parks. The number of volunteer hours for creek clean up dropped in 2018 due to changes in the Ranger program as a result of safety concerns raised by the rangers regarding litter removal in homeless encampment areas. For Alum Rock Park, the decrease in volunteer hours was primarily due to periodic park closures during the year. For Overfelt Gardens, the primary volunteer group disbanded for a portion of the year which caused the decrease in volunteer hours. Overall, it is estimated that these volunteer activities have a cumulative financial value of more than \$54,000 of service to the City.

Table 1: Volunteer Activities Coordinated by Park Rangers

Park	Volunteers		Hours		Value ¹	
	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018
Almaden Lake Park	59	11	309	37.5	\$8,794	\$1,091
Alum Rock Park	250	211	2,500	76	\$71,150	\$2,211
Kelley Park	58	5	537	413	\$15,283	\$12,014
Overfelt Gardens	228	4	2,625	175	\$74,708	\$5,091
Emma Prusch Farm Park	--	13	--	36	--	\$1,047
Watershed Protection	1,721	220	6,011	1,120	\$171,142	\$32,581
TOTALS	2,359	593	12,796	1,857.5	\$364,174	\$54,035

Park Ranger Reorganization and Staffing Levels

In July 2018, the Park Ranger Program implemented a citywide deployment model. Since then, Park Rangers are no longer assigned to a specific park or assignment (with the exception of Alum Rock Park). Instead, full time Park Rangers are now deployed to assignments based on park activity and staffing levels. Alum Rock Park, due to its remote location and unique issues, has one fixed-post Park Ranger that is rotated every 6 months. Other Park Rangers may be assigned to specific parks for their daily shift or they may be assigned to patrol a route and check on multiple parks.

With this new deployment model there is no longer a dedicated Watershed Protection Team. Watershed patrol is now handled by Park Rangers assigned to work with San Jose Police Department (SJPd) Officers on a Joint Patrol Team. The Joint Patrol Team is currently scheduled to patrol the creek areas on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

In Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the Park Ranger Program is budgeted for 14 full time Park Rangers, four Senior Park Rangers, and two Supervising Park Rangers, for a total of 20 full time Park Rangers (these positions have peace officer status). Nineteen of these positions are supported by the General Fund and one position is funded through the St. James Park Management District Fund. The Santa Clara Valley Water District provides funding that covers the costs of two of the General Fund positions. In addition, PRNS is funded for three 0.75 full time equivalent (FTE) benefited positions and has 3.34 FTE un-benefited part time Park Rangers that are not classified as peace officers. The total budgeted positions for Park Rangers is 25.59 FTE.

Currently, PRNS has filled the two Supervising Park Ranger positions, the four Senior Park Ranger positions, and five full time Park Ranger positions, leaving eight vacant full time positions. Of the three 0.75 FTE benefited positions, there is one vacancy. There are 8.75 FTE of vacant Park Ranger positions, which is a vacancy rate of 34 percent.

The Department has been actively recruiting and testing for new Park Ranger candidates and has developed a pipeline for hiring. Currently, PRNS has seven recruits in some part of the hiring process: two recruits are scheduled to start their academy training in April 2019; two recruit

¹ Value of volunteer time is calculated at \$29.09 per hour by the Independent Sector, a national non-profit policy and advocacy organization for volunteer activities.

candidates in the background check process, with three more positions being scheduled to start the background process. Currently, though, two Park Rangers plan to retire, and one Park Ranger has given notice that they will separate to take a Park Ranger position with the National Park Service. These three Park Rangers are expected to part with the City by the end of March 2019. If these seven recruits were to successfully complete their hiring process, and after the three anticipated separations, the Park Ranger Program will have five vacant positions for a 19% vacancy rate. It is important to note that these positions would not be field ready until approximately January 2020.

Park Ranger Program Highlights and Honors

During 2018, the Park Ranger Program responded to numerous public safety events, including 104 medical events, 30 wildland fires, and 22 search and rescue events. For comparison, in 2017 Park Rangers responded to 139 medical events, 14 wildland fires, and 14 search and rescue events. The Park Rangers had three incidents where use of force was needed. For each of the incidents, a *Use of Force Report* was filed and none resulted in use of force complaints. Table 2 below summarizes annual emergency responses.

Table 2: Park Ranger Emergency Response

Type of Response	2016	2017	2018
Fire Responses	24	50	30
Medical Events	122	139	104
Search and Rescue/Missing Person	5	14	22
TOTALS	151	203	156

Park Rangers also provided 14 interpretive programs with over 950 participants, up from 811 participants in 2017. Programs ranged from guided night hikes to haiku readings and plein air art for children. Many programs involved support from partners, including Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, Happy Hollow Park & Zoo, the San Jose Astronomical Association, and others. New this year was an overnight program in the Japanese Friendship Garden. In addition, Alum Rock Park Rangers also partnered with the Youth Science Institute for the 33rd Annual Wildlife Festival with an estimated attendance of 1,950 visitors for the day's activities.

Working Group Outcomes

The Park Ranger Working Group (Working Group) concluded their analysis of the Park Ranger Program on November 2, 2018. A Park Ranger Program Status Report², which outlined the conclusions of the Working Group, was accepted by the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support Committee on December 13, 2018 and City Council on January 29, 2019. Along with

² The 12/13/18 PSFSS Park Ranger Program Status Report may be viewed at:

<https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6981024&GUID=8702ED62-B736-4566-BEA0-5FA85E1E80F3>

the report, City Council also approved a memorandum from Mayor Liccardo³ dated January 29, 2019 which made the following recommendations:

- A. Accept the Park Ranger Program Status report and direct the City Manager to add Saturdays/weekend hours to the Joint Patrols routine, or at least to SJPD-only patrols in the creeks; and
- B. Return to Council during the Budget process to discuss and determine whether to shift Joint Patrols out of voluntary assignment via Secondary Employment Unit, and into standard patrol.

During the PRNS and the SJPD presentation to the City Council on January 29, 2019, there was discussion that the Park Ranger hiring standards are different from SJPD who require a more thorough psychological exam to ensure someone is qualified to be a Police Officer. To clarify, the hiring standards for Park Rangers are within the norm for peace officers and adhere to the Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) guidelines, and the Park Ranger psychological examination is the same as the psychological exam the used by the SJPD. In fact, the departments use the same doctors for this exam. Furthermore, although the hours of academy training for Park Rangers are lower than the hours of training SJPD Officers receive, the academy training and subsequent training Park Rangers receive exceeds the minimum standards set by POST.

The Police Department agrees with the joint patrol model described in the December 13, 2018 PSFSS Park Ranger Program Status Report, and has been coordinating with PRNS to staff these scheduled patrols. Since beginning joint patrols in 2018, only 47 percent of those shifts were filled due to the availability of police officers to sign up for these shifts. These shifts were originally scheduled to start at 10 a.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, which coincided with Park Ranger availability to fill the shifts. In an attempt to increase Police Officer availability and interest in these shifts the joint patrols will start at 8 a.m. beginning on March 19, 2019. The SJPD and PRNS will continue to evaluate the effectiveness and staff availability for the joint patrols.

Park Ranger Program 2019 Work Plan

Following the discussion of the *Park Ranger Program Status Report* by the City Council on January 29, 2019, PRNS is working with the SJPD to:

- A. Evaluate adding Saturdays/weekend hours to the Joint Patrols routine, or at least to SJPD-only patrols in the creeks; and
- B. Return to Council during the Budget process to discuss and determine whether to shift SJPD Joint Patrols out of voluntary assignment via Secondary Employment Unit, and into standard patrol.

The Director has since met with the Ranger staff to discuss program improvements that can be made, employee morale, and alternative tools that may be helpful moving forward. Based on the

³ The Memorandum from Mayor, 1/29/19 may be viewed at

<https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=7008365&GUID=48662E5E-4F3B-4B7A-9AC0-7DC9A7856ADA>

Council direction and the Working Group's analysis, PRNS has developed the 2019 Park Ranger work plan to include:

- **Joint Patrols** - PRNS will work with the SJPD to schedule Saturday/weekend Joint Patrols, or seek Police for patrols of the creek areas; evaluate the SJPD patrol model for Joint Patrols that uses Secondary Employment Unit or regular patrol officers for patrolling creek areas; and seek funding to continue a sustainable patrol model for parks and creeks.
- **Park Ranger Roles and Responsibilities** - PRNS will continue discussion with Park Rangers to define their roles and responsibilities in parks and incorporate this into the Park Ranger Duty Manual.
- **Recruitment** - PRNS will continue to recruit and hire for the vacant Park Ranger positions. Recruitment staff will continue to work with the Human Resources Department to actively pursue new eligible candidates.
- **Training and Safety** - Park Rangers will continue to receive updates and refresher training on topics such as arrest control techniques; laws of arrest, search and seizure, driving, natural and historical interpretation; and emergency medical response. Also, PRNS will evaluate the use of the current Park Ranger Academy located at the Santa Rosa Junior College Public Safety Training Center. Alternatives to be considered may be the SJPD Academy or other POST Basic Academy, and the potential for a new Park Ranger academy to be developed at West Valley College.
- **Distribution of the Park Ranger Duty Manual** - The existing manual was created in the 1980s and last updated in the mid-1990s. The Department has contracted with a recognized risk management firm to develop a modern and comprehensive manual for the program. Review and distribution is anticipated to be completed within the next few months.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the Human Resources Department, Police Department, City Manager's Budget Office, and the City Attorney's Office.

/s/

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Department