

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO CALIFORNIA

For the Agenda of:
September 15, 2005
9:30 A.M.

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Department of Regional Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Subject: Report Back On Request To Restore 5.0 Park Ranger/Support Positions For The American River Parkway

Contact: Stuart Frazer, Chief of Administration, 875-6023

BACKGROUND:

At the Final Budget Hearings on September 7th, your Board directed the Department of Parks, Recreation and Open Space to report back on September 15th and provide detailed information regarding the requested restoration of 5.0 Park Ranger/support positions for the American River Parkway (ARP) which were deleted in previous years, including how the positions would be utilized, and how many of the ranger positions are currently filled. The Park Ranger/support positions are designated "Countywide Priority:1 Discretionary Law Enforcement."

DISCUSSION:

Over the past 15 years Parks has continued to endure significant budget reductions. Department staffing has been reduced from a high of 125 positions in FY 1991-92, to the current level of 75. The reductions since FY 2002-03 in particular have had a significant impact on Park Ranger visibility and their proactive presence as a deterrent to crime in the ARP. These last rounds of cuts have contributed to the public perception that sections of the lower ARP are unsafe. Many visitors are unwilling to recreate in those areas.

The information below describes in detail our requests for restoration of funding for the 5.0 Park Ranger/support positions for the ARP, totaling \$543,626, as presented in Attachment IX-D, page 15, of the Recommended Final Budget package. We ask that you carefully consider these requests, as they are designed to return the luster to Sacramento's "jewel," the American River Parkway.

In addition, it should be noted that the majority of Parks' Additional Growth Requests are not true growth requests, but are actually a pleading to restore funding lost in recent years that has impacted all operations of the department, including maintenance of existing parks and recreational services, and development of new parks. Additional information summarizing the balance of our requests follows the specific information you requested regarding the 5.0 Park Ranger positions.

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Summary of 5.0 Park Ranger/support positions:

Program Title	Number of Positions	Net Cost
Park Ranger Dispatch	1.0	53,399
Park Ranger Patrol	2.0	165,006
Dedicated Patrol of the Lower American River Parkway	2.0	263,168
Cost of Collection American River Parkway	-	62,053
Totals	5.0	\$543,626

Detail of 5.0 Park Ranger/support positions:

Park Ranger Dispatch: \$53,399

Positions: 1.0 Office Assistant II

Vehicles: none

Extra Help: 0.6 FTE Park Ranger Assistants

Budget Reduction:

1.0 Office Assistant II position lost in FY 04-05 and 0.6 FTE Park Ranger Assistant extra help hours lost in FY 03-04 provide dispatch services for Park Rangers. Dispatch operates the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) and the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) to provide law enforcement information regarding people contacted by Park Ranger staff while in the field. Information provided can include any prior arrest history, warrants, and other vital facts that help Park Ranger staff make critical decisions during vehicle stops and while contacting persons who are violating the law. Dispatch is an important aspect of Park Ranger safety.

Dispatch is responsible for processing, mailing, inputting, and filing all reports prepared by the Park Ranger staff (arrest, citation, accident, and incident). Dispatch also staffs the public counter where several hundred park annual passes are sold each year, and also provides maps and information.

Restoration of funding provides a dispatcher for 100% of the shift times that Park Rangers are scheduled to work. 62% of the Park Ranger Dispatch program is currently funded.

Park Ranger Patrol: \$165,006

Positions: 2.0 Park Ranger I

Vehicles: 2

Extra Help: n/a

Budget Reduction:

Two Park Ranger positions were lost during budget reductions in FY 03/04 and FY 04/05. These two positions were primarily assigned to bike trail patrol, and the loss of the positions greatly reduced Park Ranger visibility on the bike trail. The ability to enforce the alcohol prohibition at several sites along the ARP has also been negatively impacted by the loss of these two positions.

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The reinstatement of these two lost positions would result in greater Park Ranger visibility, faster response time to incidents/accidents on the ARP, and lead to an improved level of safety for Park Rangers working in remote locations on the ARP, due to prompt back-up response from other Park Rangers. The reinstatement will provide an additional 4000 hours of Park Ranger patrol on the ARP, which equates to approximately a 20% increase in patrol. Increased Park Ranger visibility will result in less crime and help to dispel the public's perception that some areas of the ARP are unsafe.

Dedicated Patrol of the Lower American River Parkway: \$263,168

Positions: **1.0 Park Ranger I**
 1.0 Park Maintenance Worker I
Vehicles: **3**
Extra Help: **1.5 FTE Park Ranger Assistants**
 1.5 FTE Park Maintenance Aides

Program Description:

This proposed program is key to the accomplishment of changing the public's perception of the Woodlake/Cal Expo/ Discovery Park East areas as unsafe, as visibility of uniformed staff can have a significant impact on the public's willingness to recreate in this area of the Parkway.

This program requests 1.0 Park Ranger as an augmentation to the illegal camping detail and other lower ARP patrol service levels to specifically patrol the Woodlake/Cal Expo/ Discovery Park East areas of the Parkway. 1.5 FTE Park Ranger Assistants (non-peace officers) would work separately, but under the immediate direction of Park Rangers to increase the visible presence of uniformed staff in public use areas, and to serve as additional eyes and ears.

In addition, this program requests 1.0 Park Maintenance Worker I and 1.5 FTE Park Maintenance Aides to focus on cleanup of garbage, litter, and other camp debris after offenders have been cleared from illegal camps by Park Rangers. This crew would also engage in resource management protection practices to minimize loss of sensitive habitat areas, and provide enhanced protection for valuable Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle mitigation sites installed in this reach of the ARP.

Public safety in the westerly six miles of the ARP has been the subject of much public scrutiny over the past two decades. Illegal camping has created a perception of the Woodlake/Cal Expo/ Discovery Park East areas as unsafe, and that perception has affected the willingness of the public to recreate in this area of the Parkway. Although not crime free, it is staff's opinion that it is not as unsafe as it is frequently portrayed. As perception has become reality in the minds of many; however, there is constant pressure to make this portion of the Parkway more "user friendly" and safe.

During on-going deliberations related to the update of the ARP Plan, several contributing factors have been identified:

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- A sense of isolation created by the large expanse of open space in the Woodlake/Cal Expo/Discovery Park East areas
- Inconsistent, legitimate use in numbers great enough to deter criminal behavior
- The lack of a user friendly, “neighborhood” environment outside the Parkway that would likely fuel legitimate use in greater numbers (Adjacent land uses are primarily commercial and industrial)
- The 20th Street bike access and “pipe bridge” provide a direct conduit for illegal campers to the open expanses of the Parkway on the north bank
- The ARP’s proximity to service providers for chronic homeless

During the past three years, the Parks Department has dedicated two Park Rangers to the Woodlake and Discovery Park East areas to deal almost exclusively with the problems of illegal camping. Although the area is cleaner and safer than before this reassignment, the perception continues. Unfortunately, Park Rangers performing camp cleanups in remote areas are not visible to the general public, and their lack of visibility does little to instill a sense of well-being in legitimate visitors who use the bike trail, and in others who are afraid to venture off the trail. Due to the likelihood that illegal camping and its associated problems will not be solved in the near future, it seems reasonable to adjust the manner in which services are provided, and to emphasize the Parks Department’s commitment to public safety.

The following objectives will be met:

1. Increase Park Ranger visibility in active use areas (i.e., the bike trail, walking paths, equestrian trails, and parking/staging areas), for extended periods of time over the course of the day and evening, including commute hours.
2. Continue to provide garbage and camping debris cleanup on a daily basis.
3. Provide a Park Ranger presence in advance of, and in support of cleanup efforts.
4. Re-claim high value areas of the Parkway from illegal camping.

This program results in one Park Ranger and 1.5 FTE Park Ranger Assistant extra help staff to be on patrol of the lower six miles of the bicycle trail seven days per week for up to ten hours a day. This will increase Park Ranger visibility in active use areas (i.e., the bike trail, walking paths, equestrian trails, and parking/staging areas), for extended periods of time over the course of the day and evening, including commute hours. This increased visibility will help change the public’s perception that this area of the ARP is unsafe, and help foster increased legitimate use of the ARP.

In addition, this program results in 1.0 Park Maintenance Worker I and 1.5 FTE Park Maintenance Aide extra help staff to assist in the prompt collection and removal of trash and debris abandoned by illegal campers, and a reduction in resource damage to the ARP (trees, elderberries, and poles cut for firewood and fires started by abandoned campfires). Camp cleanups would continue under direction of the existing park ranger peace officer staff currently serving on the illegal camping detail. Cleanups would take place Monday through Friday. This schedule would be flexed to provide occasional cleanups on weekends.

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With the implementation of this program, Parks will be able to reallocate Park Maintenance staff to clean up illegal camp debris, which is currently being done by the Park Ranger staff assigned to the Illegal Camping detail during the course of their patrol duties. This reallocation will free up significant amounts of Park Ranger patrol time, resulting in increased Park Ranger visibility.

Cost of Collection American River Parkway: \$62,053

Positions: none

Vehicles: 1

Extra Help: 2.38 FTE Park Ranger Assistants

Budget Reduction:

2.38 FTE Park Ranger Assistants were lost during budget reductions in FY 03/04. These part-time positions were used to support the fee collection program (give employee breaks, deliver supplies, pick up receipts, and support the self-pay system, including writing parking citations for visitors that did not pay the vehicle entry fee). Without the Park Ranger Assistants, permanent Park Rangers must give employee breaks (required by state law) and spend additional time picking up receipts and enforcing the self-pay system. These tasks take time away from other patrol tasks, such as patrolling the bicycle trail or other less used portions of the Parkway.

Allows for Park Ranger Assistant extra help staff to give breaks, deliver supplies, and pick up receipts from the Kiosk operators. Allows for Park Ranger Assistants to help with iron ranger (self-pay stations), including writing absentee parking citations for failure to pay fees. Park Ranger staff will not be required to perform these duties, allowing for increased patrol of the bike trail, alcohol prohibited areas, and portions of the ARP that are perceived by the public to be unsafe.

Current Park Ranger Staffing Level And Assignments

The department currently has 19.0 Park Ranger I positions. 14.0 are assigned to ARP patrol, 1.0 to Delta patrol, 2.0 to Contract Ranger patrol services, and an additional 2.0 that are assigned to the ARP are currently vacant (an Examination Request was submitted on February 7, 2005).

Additional Requests

In addition to the requests for reinstatement of funding detailed above (found in Attachment IX-D, page 15, of the Recommended Final Budget package), Parks submitted additional requests for reinstatement of funding lost since FY 2002-03 that have not been recommended for approval by the County Executive's Office. Included is a request for reinstatement of an Associate Landscape Architect position that was cut in FY 2004-05 (Attachment IX-D, page 26). Reinstatement of this professional position will allow the department to complete Capital Improvement Projects in a timely manner, before \$9.7 million of potential grant funding is lost.

Parks has submitted additional requests for new programs that are designed to enhance the Quality of Life in the Sacramento area. Program Descriptions for these additional requests can be found in the budget package in Attachment IX-D, on pages 15 and 26-29. Additional requests

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for Parks Construction Fund can be found in Attachment IX-D, on page 4 (Non-General Fund CEO Not Recommended Additional Requests). Staff will be available to answer any questions you may have or to provide additional information regarding any of the requests.

Summary of Additional Requests:

Item #	Program Title	Year Cut	Number of Positions	Net Cost
1	Contract Maintenance		2.0	0
2	Park Maintenance	2002-03	-	21,965
3	Park Design/ Planning/Development/ Review (Planning)	2004-05	1.0	129,095
4	Pond/Goethe, El Manto, Lower Sunrise, Sacramento Bar (ARP -Maint)	2002-03/2004-05	1.0	155,094
5	Department Safety Specialist		1.0	52,873
6	Illegal Camping (ARP-Maintenance)	2002-03	1.0	69,314
7	Deferred Equipment (ARP-Maintenance)		-	136,000
8	Recreation Supervisor	2003-04	1.0	77,379
9	Gibson Ranch Park		-	33,454
10	Paradise, Howe, Cal Expo, Watt, Waterton, Gristmill, Sarah Court, Sarah Park, Upper Sunrise, Sailor Bar (ARP - Maint)	2002-03/2004-05	-	48,287
11	Discovery Park (ARP - Maintenance)	2002-03/2004-05	-	173,352
12	Supervisor (ARP - Effie Yeaw Nature Center)	2004-05	1.0	51,743
13	Florin East Grammar School		-	93,830
14	Administrative Support - Sr Office Assistant- Confidential	2002-03	-	58,072
15	Nature Center Operations Effie Yeaw Nature Center)	2004-05	-	11,587
16	Park Maintenance	2004-05	1.0	182,497
17	Construction Fund/Regionals - Dry Creek Trail		-	100,000
18	Construction Fund/Regionals - Dry Creek Acquisition		-	250,000
19	Construction Fund/ARP Invasive Plant Management		-	250,000
Totals			9.0	1,894,542

Respectfully Submitted,

APPROVED:

Ron Suter, Director
 Department of Regional Parks, Recreation and
 Open Space

TERRY SCHUTTEN,
 County Executive

By:

Cheryl Creson, Administrator
 Municipal Services Agency