



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Albert Balagso

**SUBJECT:** PARK RANGER PROGRAM

**DATE:** May 29, 2009

Approved

Date

5-29-09

## BACKGROUND

As a General Fund budget balancing strategy, the Park Ranger program has been proposed for elimination in the 2009-2010 Proposed Operating Budget. At the May 7, 2009 City Council Study Session on the Neighborhood Services CSA, questions were raised regarding options for fire response times, the availability of emergency equipment that is currently assigned to the Park Rangers, restoring a portion of the program, and the potential use of volunteers to help mitigate the impacts of this proposed reduction. This memorandum was prepared in response to those questions.

## ANALYSIS

### **Fire Response Times and Emergency Equipment**

In the event of medical emergencies, first response would rest fully with the San José Fire Department. As a result, overall medical response times may increase for park visitors. While the drive time from the Fire Department would be unchanged, there may be an increase in time for call taking since the general public is not trained in emergency response protocol that may lead to incomplete dispatch information. Additionally, once Fire arrives on site, it may take longer for Fire to locate the incident since Park Rangers would not be on site to direct them to the incident. It is difficult to quantify what the overall increase in response time would be since that specific data is not collected. Additionally, the number of medical calls for service to the Fire Department may increase since the Park Rangers will not be available to handle even minor first aid cases that are currently treated with no medical care required from the Fire Department.

Park Rangers are also trained to look for signs of wildfire at our remote facilities (e.g. Alum Rock Park) especially during periods of high fire danger. They are also equipped to provide a minimal level of initial attack/response in the event of a wildfire. Fire risk is a particular concern at Alum Rock Park due to its seclusion and steep canyons. In the past 10 years, there have been over 40 fires within the park boundary reported by the Park Rangers. Of those, approximately 30 fires were unintentionally set trash can fires. These trash can fires for the most part were a result of individuals disposing of hot coals from BBQs. Additionally, in the last 5 years, Park Rangers have had to evacuate Alum Rock Park on three occasions due to fires burning outside of the Park boundary when there was the potential for the fire to enter the Park. The proposed elimination of the Park Ranger Program would leave maintenance

May 29, 2009

**Subject:** Park Ranger Program

Page 2

staff as the only dedicated City staff at the Regional Parks. While maintenance staff are not specifically trained to look for or respond to wildfires, they would be a continued City presence in the Regional Parks and could make calls to and direct the Fire Department to incident sites.

Park Rangers at Kelley and Almaden Lake Parks are also equipped with fire fighting equipment and have been involved in fire related emergencies. As it relates to fire fighting equipment, Park Rangers at Alum Rock Park are equipped with two truck mounted fire fighting units, nomex fire fighting clothing and fire shelters. For emergency response, there is an ATV, stokes litters, two Automatic External Defibrillators, oxygen management devices and various advanced and standard first aid materials, as well as some low angle rescue equipment. This equipment may not be of benefit to the Fire Department since both of the truck mounted fire fighting units are not as well equipped as similar units in the Fire Department. San Jose Fire already possesses the rest of the equipment; however, the Fire Department will want to review all equipment before any items are put in surplus.

The 2009-2010 Proposed Capital Budget includes \$150,000 in funding for phones and signage to be placed in the regional parks. Phones would be placed at the parks with bodies of water (Lake Cunningham, Lake Almaden, and Overfelt Gardens), and signage would be placed in the remaining regional parks reminding people of basic use expectations and to outline expectations tied to key operating protocols in the absence of ranger staffing.

### **Alternative to Proposed Park Ranger Reduction**

Based on the questions and comments received during the budget process, staff reviewed several alternatives including additional Regional Park closures, a volunteer service program, a staffing model based on roving versus fixed post staffing, and the retention of only full-time staff; however, a reduced program, as outlined below, was the only viable alternative that created significant cost savings while preserving the most critical elements.

In the Proposed Operating Budget, the Park Ranger Program elimination, effective October 1, 2009, saved \$1,429,783 in 2009-2010, with ongoing savings totaling \$1,808,459. The savings generated by the Park Ranger program elimination in 2009-2010 (\$1,510,146) was partially offset by the addition of 2.25 part-time Account Clerks (\$80,363), added to oversee fee collection supervision. Attachment A is a breakdown by park of program costs. If the City Council should choose to restore all or a portion of the Park Ranger Program, the added costs for the Account Clerks would need to be reduced accordingly. An alternative to eliminating the entire Park Ranger program would be to retain full Park Ranger services at the highest priority sites. Based on this approach, staff has evaluated each of the sites that currently have Park Ranger services and developed a proposal (Attachment B) that will allow services to remain at key sites while still trying to achieve a significant General Fund savings. With these goals in mind staff has identified the top three regional park sites as Alum Rock, Guadalupe River, and Lake Cunningham Parks. Retaining Park Ranger services at only these key sites would retain 8.0 full time and 4.3 part time positions. This option would cost \$698,763 in 2009-2010 and \$874,560 ongoing, once the added costs for the Account Clerks are eliminated. When compared to the overall Park Ranger program, this reduced program is approximately 50% of the current program in terms of size and scope. The Reduced Park Ranger Program attachment lists the resources needed to implement this reduced program. Each of the three sites selected have unique needs that make them

May 29, 2009

**Subject:** Park Ranger Program

Page 3

the highest priority locations for Park Ranger services. The following list highlights some of these elements:

1. Alum Rock Park (\$273,755 ongoing to restore Park Ranger services at this site).
  - a. Remote location
  - b. Unique natural resources
  - c. Very challenging terrain
  
2. Guadalupe River Park (\$325,142 ongoing to restore Park Ranger services at this site).
  - a. Significant special event venue
  - b. Downtown location / Security issues
  - c. Relationship with Guadalupe River and trails
  
3. Lake Cunningham (\$350,130 ongoing to restore Park Ranger services at this site).
  - a. Busiest regional park
  - b. Unique relationship with Raging Waters
  - c. Proposed location for night time park use via lights at skate park

The remaining regional park sites, which traditionally have less complex operational needs and/or attendance levels would not be provided with Park Ranger coverage.

### **Volunteer Patrol Program**

Staff reviewed the possibility of a volunteer patrol program, and while this program could replace some aspects of the Ranger program, such as tour docents, there are significant safety and logistical concerns with relying on volunteers for the provision of all the services that are currently provided by Park Rangers. Not only would supervision and training require resources, but there would be liability concerns and personal safety issues related to placing volunteers in the field. Other issues include:

- Program expansion would require additional support for planning, coordination, monitoring and supervision.
- Volunteers are more effective in support of one-time projects or specifically focused ongoing needs (such as rose pruning). Support to repetitive ongoing program needs is very difficult to schedule effectively.

Volunteers may be able to support some needs, but many others are not appropriate, such as enforcement/citations, fire response, code three equipment operations, medical aid at “first responder” level, and supervision of fee collection staff.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

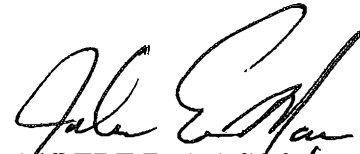
May 29, 2009

**Subject:** Park Ranger Program

Page 4

**COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Manager's Office as well as initial coordination with the Police Department and Fire Department.



ALBERT BALAGSO  
Director of Parks, Recreation and  
Neighborhood Services

Attachments: San Jose Park Ranger Program  
Reduced Park Ranger Program

For questions, please contact Mark Marney, Deputy Director, PRNS (408) 535-3582

## San Jose Park Ranger Program

Site	Job Title	FTE	Non- Personal	2009-2010 Staffing	2009-2010 Site Total*	Ongoing Staffing	Ongoing Non- Personal	Ongoing Site Total*
Almaden Lake Park	Park Ranger	2.00		137,196		176,504		
	Park Ranger PT	1.30		60,085		77,662		
<b>Almaden Lake Total</b>		<b>3.30</b>	<b>20,238</b>	<b>197,281</b>	<b>217,519</b>	<b>254,166</b>	<b>20,238</b>	<b>274,404</b>
Alum Rock	Park Ranger	2.00		131,872		169,624		
	Park Ranger PT	1.05		51,312		66,326		
	Park Ranger Trainee	0.50		13,038		16,852		
<b>Alum Rock Total</b>		<b>3.55</b>	<b>20,953</b>	<b>196,222</b>	<b>217,175</b>	<b>252,802</b>	<b>20,953</b>	<b>273,755</b>
Guadalupe River Park	Park Ranger	3.00		179,108		230,363		
	Park Ranger PT	1.20		55,694		72,341		
<b>Guadalupe River Park Total</b>		<b>4.20</b>	<b>22,438</b>	<b>234,802</b>	<b>257,240</b>	<b>302,704</b>	<b>22,438</b>	<b>325,142</b>
Kelley Park	Park Ranger	1.00		68,598		88,252		
	Park Ranger PT	1.70		79,512		103,485		
<b>Kelley Park Total</b>		<b>2.70</b>	<b>31,241</b>	<b>148,110</b>	<b>179,351</b>	<b>191,737</b>	<b>31,241</b>	<b>222,978</b>
Lake Cunningham	Park Ranger	3.00		200,470		257,876		
	Park Ranger PT	1.55		68,993		89,979		
<b>Lake Cunningham Total</b>		<b>4.55</b>	<b>2,275</b>	<b>269,463</b>	<b>271,738</b>	<b>347,855</b>	<b>2,275</b>	<b>350,130</b>
Overfelt	Park Ranger	1.00		68,598		88,252		
	Park Ranger PT	0.40		17,456		23,275		
<b>Overfelt Total</b>		<b>1.40</b>	<b>9,290</b>	<b>86,054</b>	<b>95,344</b>	<b>111,527</b>	<b>9,290</b>	<b>120,817</b>
Prusch Park	Park Ranger	3.00		188,900		242,988		
	Park Ranger PT	0.66		29,779		38,493		
<b>Prusch Total</b>		<b>3.66</b>	<b>4,931</b>	<b>218,679</b>	<b>223,610</b>	<b>281,481</b>	<b>4,931</b>	<b>286,412</b>
Trails	Park Ranger PT	1.07	-	48,170		62,261	-	
<b>Trails Total</b>		<b>1.07</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>48,170</b>	<b>48,170</b>	<b>62,261</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>62,261</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>24.43</b>	<b>111,366</b>	<b>1,398,780</b>	<b>1,510,146</b>	<b>1,804,533</b>	<b>111,366</b>	<b>1,915,899</b>

\*Does not account for addition of Part-Time Account Clerks (\$80,363 in 2009-2010 and \$107,440 ongoing).

**Reduced Park Ranger Program at Alum Rock, Guadalupe River, and Lake Cunningham**

Site	Job Title	FTE	2009-2010 Staffing	2009-2010 Non-Personal	2009-2010 Site Total	Ongoing Staffing	Ongoing Non-Personal	Ongoing Site Total
Alum Rock	Park Ranger	2.00	131,872			169,624		
	Park Ranger PT	1.05	51,312			66,326		
	Park Ranger Trainee	0.50	13,038			16,852		
<b>Alum Rock Total</b>		<b>3.55</b>	<b>196,222</b>	<b>20,953</b>	<b>217,175</b>	<b>252,802</b>	<b>20,953</b>	<b>273,755</b>
Guadalupe River Park	Park Ranger	3.00	179,108			230,363		
	Park Ranger PT	1.20	55,694			72,341		
<b>Guadalupe River Park Total</b>		<b>4.20</b>	<b>234,802</b>	<b>22,438</b>	<b>257,240</b>	<b>302,704</b>	<b>22,438</b>	<b>325,142</b>
Lake Cunningham	Park Ranger	3.00	200,470			257,876		
	Park Ranger PT	1.55	68,993			89,979		
<b>Lake Cunningham Total</b>		<b>4.55</b>	<b>269,463</b>	<b>2,275</b>	<b>271,738</b>	<b>347,855</b>	<b>2,275</b>	<b>350,130</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>12.30</b>	<b>700,487</b>	<b>45,666</b>	<b>746,153</b>	<b>903,361</b>	<b>45,666</b>	<b>949,027</b>
Savings from 1.51 part-time Account Clerks not needed due to restoration of Ranger services					<b>(47,390)</b>			<b>(74,467)</b>
Total cost of restoring Ranger services at Alum Rock, Guadalupe River, and Lake Cunningham Parks						<b>698,763</b>		<b>874,560</b>