



Memo

To: Open Space Advisory Committee
From: John Costello, Park Ranger
cc: David Navarro, Park Operations Superintendent
Date: October 15, 2018
Re: Park Ranger Report

I, John Costello, have been a Park Ranger for Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space for just under three years now. My partner, Allan Biddle, has been a Park Ranger for the department for seven years. Our work schedules during the summer months are very different from our hours during the winter months. For the most part, our schedules go along with sunset. During the summer months, a ranger is on until at least 10 p.m. During the winter months, a ranger is on until approximately 6 p.m. These schedules give Park Rangers the ability to enforce the rules and regulations of our parks and open spaces until dusk, year round.

As I've stated in the past, no day is the same for a Park Ranger, but that is what is so intriguing about the job. Just recently, there was an incident in Carson River Canyon regarding a stolen vehicle. It was a Friday evening; I was approximately three miles back in Carson River Canyon when I noticed a vehicle appear on the single track road from behind me. The front end of the vehicle was hanging over the edge of the road the next time I looked in my rear view mirror. I got to a point where I could turn around on the road in order to head back and assist the motorist. I had already radioed into dispatch to get a tow truck in route because the vehicle was high centered on a single track road where there was no room to turn around. While heading back to the location of the vehicle, I noticed that the vehicle was gone. The closer I got to the original location of the vehicle, I could see further down the canyon and see the river. Once I got approximately a quarter mile from the original location of the vehicle, I observed the vehicle on its roof in the river, about 500 feet down from the road it was originally on. I advised dispatch that the vehicle was on its roof in the river and it was unknown whether or not the vehicle was occupied. The last I saw the vehicle; there was an occupant, so I have to assume that there is someone in the vehicle. I made my way down to where the vehicle was located and got into the river in order to check the vehicle for any occupants. There were swimmers that were assisting me by checking the passenger side. Once the fire department arrived, it was confirmed that there was no occupants in the vehicle. All departments came to a conclusion that the driver of the vehicle had stolen the vehicle from a residence and pushed it off the ridge top. No arrests were made.

As a Park Ranger, enforcement is a large part of what we do in order to control the amount of incidents in parks and open space areas. We try to protect the people from the resource, and the resource from the people. In the three years that I have been on with Carson City, I have seen a significant decrease in the amount of incidents in our open space areas. In the last year since my last report, there have been only six dumpsites (down from 11 in 2017) in open spaces areas according to my records. When I first got on with the city, sign vandalism was a big issue. We seemed to be replacing signs every week. Because of our persistence and dedication to educate through signage, we only had three signs either vandalized or stolen in the last year, down from 11 vandalism incidents

last year. It is evident that the amount of incidents has decreased each year since I have been on with the city thanks to the continued dedication of the open space staff. We are still working with multiple parties in order to get the gate at Deer Run Bridge operational. Although incidents have decreased dramatically, the gate is still needed to cut down on activity in the canyon after dusk. Once we get the gate fully operational, I truly believe this will eliminate much of the illegal activity going on in the canyon.

One area that has been of emphasis in the last year has been building the interpretive program. We were lucky enough in the last year to have an AmeriCorp Vista member serve as our Education Outreach Coordinator. The main objective for the position was to create interpretive programs to get the community more involved in our parks and open spaces. The Education Outreach Coordinator created a Jr. Ranger program that involved kids in the community between the ages of 5-13. The kids would have to go through four Jr. Ranger programs in order to get their Jr. Ranger badges at the end. The topics for the Jr. Ranger events were: Leave No Trace Hike, Nature Navigation, Wildlife Walk, and Environmental Career Day. Our first Jr. Ranger program was a part of our Kids to Parks Day event out at Silver Saddle Ranch. We had two food trucks, a variety of agencies that set booths up, as well as booths with activities for the kids. A couple of the booths for kids had face painting and kite making which was a big hit. Some of the groups that had booths set up were Nevada Division of Wildlife, Muscle Powered, and a local bee keepers group. Kids to Parks Day was our largest event involving Jr. Ranger. The second Jr. Ranger program was Nature Navigation. We were lucky enough to partner with the Carson High School's Jr. ROTC program. The ROTC kids taught orienteering to the Jr. Ranger. We set out on the trail at Riverview Park and had the kid use a compass and map to find certain points within the park. The third Jr. Ranger program was our Wildlife Walk at Prison Hill. I taught the Jr. Rangers about local flora and fauna while we went for a short hike from the Clearview Trailhead. The fourth and final Jr. Ranger program was Environmental Career Day, which was held out at Carson River Park. The Jr. Rangers learned from professionals on what it takes to pursue a career in the environmental field. Our Park Ranger, Allan Biddle talked to the kids on how he became a park ranger and what kinds of skills are used in the position. There was a representative from Nevada Division of Wildlife that talked about the similar responsibilities to a park ranger, and some of the major differences. Lynn Zonge with RCI was nice enough to present to the Jr. Rangers as well. Lynn talked about her occupation as a Fluvial Geomorphologist and Hydrologist and what education she earned. Once the final Jr. Ranger program was completed, the kids earned their Jr. Ranger badges. The interpretive programs and Jr. Ranger programs have been a positive for the department. We only look to expand and improve upon the existing programs that we have in place, while also creating new programs based on what community members are interested in.

As a full time Park Ranger with Carson City for almost three years now, I look forward to my future with the department. I'm seeing first-hand the improvements that are being made for the park ranger program, in a collaborative effort with parks and open space. I'm grateful for the continued support of the open space program, as well as from the Open Space Advisory Committee. I'm thankful that I am given the opportunity to attend trainings that I feel will help me grow as a professional in the field. I will continue to strive to help improve Carson City open space, and all that comes with representing the parks, recreation and open space department.