

Re: State Parks Staffing Hearing

Little Hoover Commissioners,

I am writing today to express my concerns for our resources that are in danger, in part, to the current staffing at State Parks. The management of parks by a police force is the most absurd management structure I have ever seen. Long dead is the Park Ranger that knew and cared about our precious natural and cultural resources. With increased arms and training while lowering the entrance requirements (once a 4 year relevant degree was required) this is what we are left with... Upper management that are nothing more than Peace Officers without any connection to the resources they are sworn to protect; and thus have a limited interest. I have heard time and time again about State Parks Peace Officers and their ambivalence toward resources protection and management. Couple this with the fact that the Parks Police have a stranglehold on upper management is a recipe for disaster and that is exactly where we are today. No other classification other than a Peace Officer can manage a park or park district. By doing this they can maintain their good old boy network from a very small pool all the while ignoring a larger pool of potential educated, talented, and dynamic people who could do the job better. There are folks out there with Park Management or Park Science degrees that cannot work for State Parks, because their degrees mean nothing to the Parks Police or Agency, and are seen as not qualified because they don't have a badge and a gun. What a disgrace. This current structure has also created deep seated divisions within the agency so I am told.

I would like to share with you what an old Ranger in Southern California once told me. I am using Ranger and not Peace Officer here because, unlike most of them, she was knowledgeable and actually cared about the resources. She told me, "The Police should not be in charge of the money and management". There is a lot of funny stuff that goes on out in the park districts and each one of them is run like a fiefdom. Thinking about where we are today with parks what that Ranger told me rings very true....The Police should not be in charge of the money. If the people of California really care about their parks, the resources and quality recreation then the Parks Police need to just be Police and leave the resources/land/facilities/people management to others.

Thank you for your attention.

A concerned native Californian,

S. Vincent, Sacramento

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LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION