

California Department of Parks and Recreation

Policy Manual

LAW ENFORCEMENT PHILOSOPHY

In the minds of most citizens, the title "Ranger," "Lifeguard," or "State Park Peace Officer" often evokes a positive image of a professional who is dedicated to the service of the public, a friend, guardian, ally who is genuinely committed to helping park visitors achieve a wholesome, safe, and rewarding park experience. This image is the reason many choose to spend their lives as State Park Peace Officers, and has a great deal of value to the Department.

Law enforcement authority is not in conflict with our traditional image. Law enforcement is, after all, a positive and necessary public service and thus is a natural complement to our role as guardians and protectors. As a Ranger or a Lifeguard, you have been charged with the responsibility for protecting and preserving the public and the public's cherished resources, as well as an image that has been zealously guarded and entrusted to your care.

Rising crime and social impacts encroach upon our parks which in addition to being the preserved treasures of California's heritage, have long been sanctuaries for peace and enjoyment, places to relax, to be carefree, to get away from it all, or to "hone the edge" through world class recreational opportunities. Society's expectations for parks have not changed, but it is becoming increasingly difficult for our peace officers to preserve this pristine portrait.

Regardless of the increased use and rising crime rate in parks, all park visitors have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be dealt with in a courteous and cordial manner. Our goals continue to be the provision of a rewarding park experience, and protection of the public's cherished natural and cultural resources.