



Date: September 17, 2020
To: Parks & Community Services Board
From: Laura Harper, Park Ranger
Jammie Kingham, Environmental Programs Supervisor
Subject: 2020 Summer Ranger Program

BACKGROUND

The Parks & Community Services Department established the Park Ranger Program in 1987 with the development of the Lake Hills Greenbelt and Phantom Lake Management Plan. Park Rangers play an integral role in public communication, outreach, customer service, and safety. Park Rangers are stationed at visitor centers located in the Lake Hills Greenbelt, Lewis Creek Park and Mercer Slough Nature Park. With increased park visitation during the busy summer months, the Park Ranger Program expands with additional seasonal staff from Memorial Day – Labor Day.

RANGER DUTIES

Summer Park Rangers are Seasonal Assistant Park Rangers who are uniformed, front line ambassadors providing a daily presence in the parks from 8am – 12am. Rangers work cooperatively with Bellevue Police and other agencies to help increase user safety, prevent resource degradation, and improve park user satisfaction. Rangers perform daily park patrols to provide education of park rules, reduce user conflicts, and decrease undesirable behavior. In addition, rangers lead environmental programs designed to increase knowledge and understanding of Bellevue's natural and cultural resources. With new COVID-19 guidelines in place in 2020, rangers collected COVID-19 related park use data, assisted with maintenance activities including placement/replacement of social distancing and closed structure signage and caution tape, litter pick up and graffiti removal. Additional data collection including number of people using closed park structures, number of people not following social distancing guidelines, and total number of people using parks and defined beach areas. This data included beach park population density counts to assess if social distancing was possible in beach areas during high use days/times. Other duties include the following:

- Coordinate with state and local agencies on wildlife issues
- Maintain updated information in the park kiosk system
- Perform park visitation studies, monitor use, and solicit user feedback
- Document and report code violations to appropriate enforcement agencies
- Maintain accurate records, reports, and statistics on park use
- Hike trail system and report trail conditions, vandalism, user counts, etc.

- Work with Police and outreach services to address unlawful camping on parks property
- Patrol Phantom Lake per the LHGB Management Plan

2020 SUMMER RANGER ACTIVITY REPORT

The table below summarizes data collection and outreach efforts during the 2020 Summer Park Ranger Program.

| Park Ranger Collected Data | May | Jun* | Jul* | Aug* | Sep* | YTD |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|------|--------------|
| Activity Highlights | | | | | | |
| Parks Patrolled | 1075 | 1781 | 1836 | 1690 | 459 | 6841 |
| Parks Locked | 42 | 204 | 228 | 257 | 51 | 782 |
| Parking Notice Issued | 25 | 48 | 53 | 78 | 5 | 209 |
| Illegal Camping | 4 | 9 | 9 | 13 | 10 | 45 |
| Vandalism | 13 | 11 | 26 | 35 | 4 | 89 |
| Immediate Response Requested | 35 | 26 | 32 | 32 | 8 | 133 |
| Other | 106 | 179 | 32 | 223 | 195 | 735 |
| COVID-# of People in Closed Areas | 713 | 2495 | 2404 | 3645 | 1204 | 10461 |
| COVID-# of People Violating Social Distancing Guidelines | 644 | 2149 | 7504 | 13241 | 3144 | 26682 |
| | | | | | | |
| User Contacts | | | | | | |
| Patrons contacted | 6633 | 9333 | 13060 | 13564 | 4361 | 46951 |
| Provided Assistance | 95 | 81 | 117 | 133 | 56 | 482 |
| Dogs Off-Leash and/or in Beach Parks | 450 | 518 | 537 | 502 | 147 | 2154 |
| In Park After Hours | 287 | 1306 | 1201 | 486 | 41 | 3321 |

Illegal Camping = ranger response to issues related to unlawful encampments.

Other = all contacts made that are not otherwise captured such as Parking Notices, dumping, and unusual calls.

Dogs Off-Leash and/or in Beach Park = All dogs seen without a leash. In most occurrences rangers speak with the patron(s).

Immediate Response Requested = Direct responses to patron or city employee phone calls requesting immediate ranger support to address issue(s). Issues may include but are not limited to dogs off-leash or in beach parks causing problems, launching or landing watercraft from inappropriate area, picnic rental conflict, other park rules violations that would benefit from education.

POPULATION DENSITY DATA

As beach park usage increased in late July through August, rangers noticed patrons concentrating in beach areas, making social distancing difficult even though space was available within other areas of the park. Rangers were able to estimate if social distancing was possible in beach areas by measuring the square footage of beach area, determining the square footage needed for each person to maintain a safe distance, and counting the number of people present. From mid-July through August there were 12 occurrences when social distancing was not possible based on these population density counts.

MEYDENBAUER PUBLIC DOCK STAFFING

The City has provided summer ranger staffing from Memorial Day – Labor Day at the Meydenbauer Marina since 2014. This season the ranger was onsite Wednesday- Sunday from 1:30pm-10:00pm. Marina rules allow free day-use moorage at the guest dock for up to 4-hours from dawn to 9:00pm. Drop-in overnight moorage is not permitted. Summer Rangers interacted with 3050 visitors this season and provided the following services:

- Greeted and assisted marina visitors
- Addressed noise complaints
- Managed marina parking lot
- Provided education on Marina and park rules

2020 MARINA SUMMARY DATA

The table below summarizes data collected by the Marina Ranger at Meydenbauer Bay during the 2020 season.

| Marina Ranger Collected Data | May | June | July | August | September | Total |
|-----------------------------------|-----|------|------|--------|-----------|---------------|
| Number of boats | 70 | 222 | 449 | 460 | 14 | 1215 |
| Hours Occupied | 36 | 127 | 247 | 271 | 22 | 703 |
| Average Length of Stay (in hours) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 hour |
| Number of Pick-ups/ Drop-offs | 31 | 92 | 219 | 221 | 10 | 573 |
| Boats After Hours | 2 | 11 | 18 | 20 | 4 | 55 |

Rangers attribute the short one-hour length of stay to restaurants opening for carry out service only during much of the season. Very few boats exceeded 3 hours and there are no instances of boats exceeding the 4-hour limit during day use.

CONCLUSION

The Summer Park Ranger Program serves as a valuable link between the City of Bellevue and its park patrons. Rangers provide a friendly, approachable face that helps ensure safe and enjoyable park patron experiences. The Summer Park Ranger Program is just one example of how Bellevue Parks provides an elevated level of customer service making Bellevue a world class city.

RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT:

- Addressed community needs including COVID-19 related data collection, park maintenance, park conflicts, and park rules education/outreach.
- Reached **46830 patrons**, assisted **466 patrons**, and provided **130** immediate responses.

HEALTHY & SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

- Educated park users about Bellevue's natural environment and fostered environmental awareness in Bellevue park patrons

SAFE COMMUNITY

- Increased safety throughout Bellevue parks with regular ranger presence, evening sweeps and gate locking, and providing timely quality assistance
- Coordinated with Bellevue emergency services when needed

QUALITY NEIGHBORHOODS/INNOVATIVE, VIBRANT AND CARING COMMUNITY

- Educated park patrons and neighbors while offering a friendly face to the City.
- Assisted park patrons with understanding COVID-19 related park use guidelines and facility closure/opening updates
- Updated park signage and regularly answered questions related to COVID-19 changes, connected patrons to needed services and shared alternative park locations that best fit user needs when popular park sites were crowded

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