



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

REPORT TO COUNCIL

March 5, 2015

To: Mayor Charlie Hales and City Council
From: Mike Abbaté, Portland Parks & Recreation Director

Subject: Report to City Council on Portland Parks & Recreation Park Ranger Program.

Introduction:

Attached to this memorandum is the Park Ranger Program Assessment. This assessment provides a brief overview of the Ranger program's history and highlights the contributions of Rangers to the Parks system and community since its inception in the early 1990's. In addition, the assessment presents program performance measures such as percentage of residents feeling safe in a park alone, the number of positive and educational contacts, and nuisance abatements. The impact of prioritization of resources by geographic division, previous Council commitments, and dedicated ranger dollars on the Ranger program is also examined.

We recommend that Council accept the Portland Parks & Recreation Park Ranger Program Assessment.

Mike Abbaté, Portland Parks & Recreation Director

3.5.15

Date

TO THE COUNCIL:

Report to City Council on Portland Parks & Recreation approves the Ranger Report.

ATTACHMENTS:

Portland Parks & Recreation Park Ranger Program Assessment

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Abbaté,
Director, Portland Parks & Recreation



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland



Park Ranger Program Assessment

March 2015

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Executive Summary

Portland Parks & Recreation's Rangers serve as goodwill ambassadors and are charged with providing information, educating park users and gaining voluntary compliance for park rules. In addition, the rangers resolve park user conflicts and enforce City Code; their service area includes more than 11,000 acres of parks and natural areas. Since its inception in the early 1990's, the Ranger program has shown success in frequently visited parks including decreases in nuisance activities and crime.

This report provides a brief overview of the Ranger program and is based on an east/west geographic division of the city by the Willamette River. This division shows previously committed funding on the west side of the river and significantly fewer funding resources for the east side. The report also illustrates that a series of previous council commitments and dedicated ranger dollars have shaped the program over time.

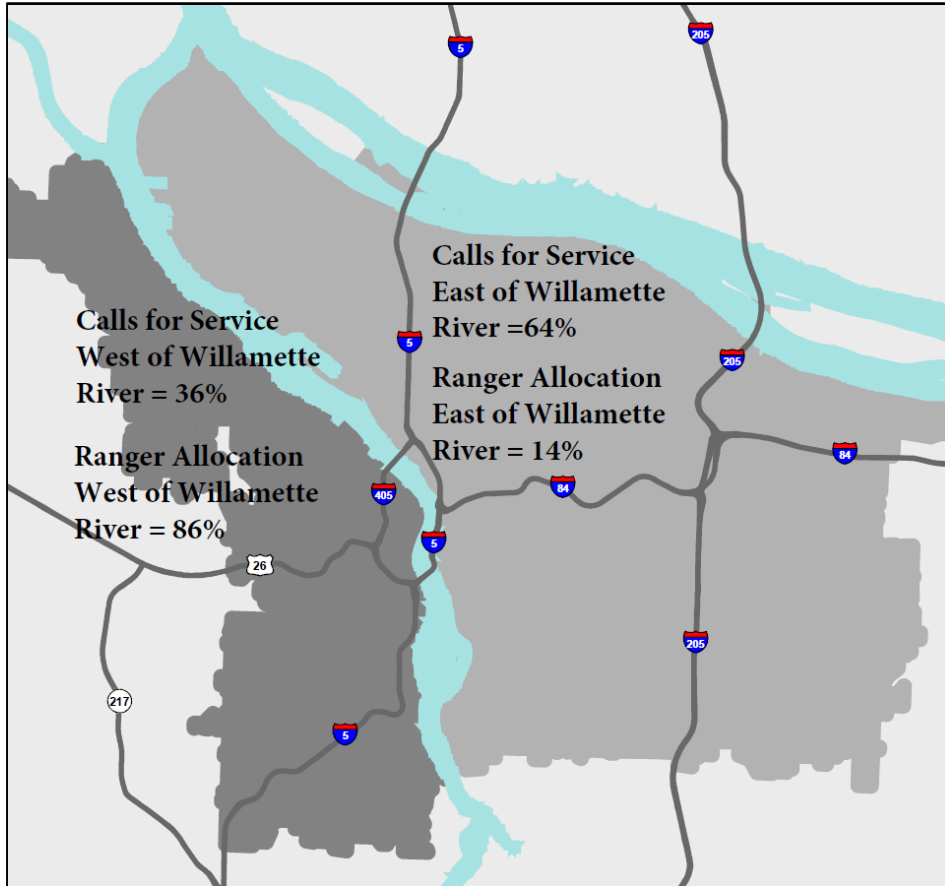
These commitments include:

- 2010 dedicated ranger staffing in Forest Park
- 2011 conversion of private security dollars in Central Business District (CCBD) to dedicated ranger staffing
- 2013 conversion of bathroom lockup dollars to seasonal ranger capacity
- 2014 commitment to use parking revenues in Washington Park for dedicated rangers

These commitments and associated dollars led to the creation of seven full-time (FTEs) ranger positions, dedicated to specific areas of the west side. The full-time employees work in pairs with seasonal rangers, leaving approximately two seasonal staff to respond on a daily basis to issues east of the river.

With PP&R's ranger capacity concentrated on the west side of the city, the east side, which gets more than 60% of all calls for service, receives less services. Even more significant, the services in the east tend to be reactive and less proactive. Perhaps as a result, as reported by the City Auditor's annual resident survey, perception of safety in parks in east Portland is tracking behind citywide resident perception.

The map on the next page compares the daily staffing plan with calls for service, west and east of the river.



While PP&R has used one-time dollars and management discretion to assign ranger capacity to hot spots citywide, this model is not sustainable, not equitable, and needs to be addressed with additional Council guidance.

Options for Council may include the following:

- 1) Allowing PP&R management more flexibility from historic commitments to patrol Forest Park and the Central Business District (CCBD). This may include reduced service levels at west side parks, when appropriate, in order to better serve parks east of the river.
- 2) Maintaining existing service level west of the river and allocating additional resources to PP&R to increase the capacity of the Ranger program to proactively serve parks east of the river.
- 3) A combination of options one and two.

Program Overview and History

More than 25 years ago, the Ranger program was created to provide presence in PP&R's growing system. At that time, PP&R had one full-time ranger supervisor and relied on seasonal rangers and private security contracts to address security throughout the city to do bathroom lockups and had no duties in Washington Park. The rangers did not patrol CCBD and were assigned to citywide responsibilities.

In 2010, per Council directive, PP&R created the Forest Park Ranger position (FPR) to improve safety and protect the health of the Park. In 2012, with Council approval, PP&R converted some of its security contracts to hire three full-time Park Rangers to provide year-round coverage in CCBD. The CCBD FTEs work in teams with seasonal rangers. This decision allowed PP&R to provide integrated customer service, focus on maintenance and security, as well as expand ranger presence into the Pearl District and South Waterfront parks.

In 2013, the program converted the bathroom lockup contract to seasonal ranger work, which pulled two seasonal positions from other ranger duties. Currently five seasonal rangers do bathroom lockups from March to October. Also in 2013, the program's budget was infused with one-time dollars to increase the program's seasonal capacity. The infusion of one-time funding was a result of gang activity and shootings in parks. This one-time funding increased the seasonal capacity to three times the size of the approved FY 2013-14 budget. Finally, in January of 2014, the program added three full-time and two seasonal rangers at Washington Park as a result of dedicated revenue.

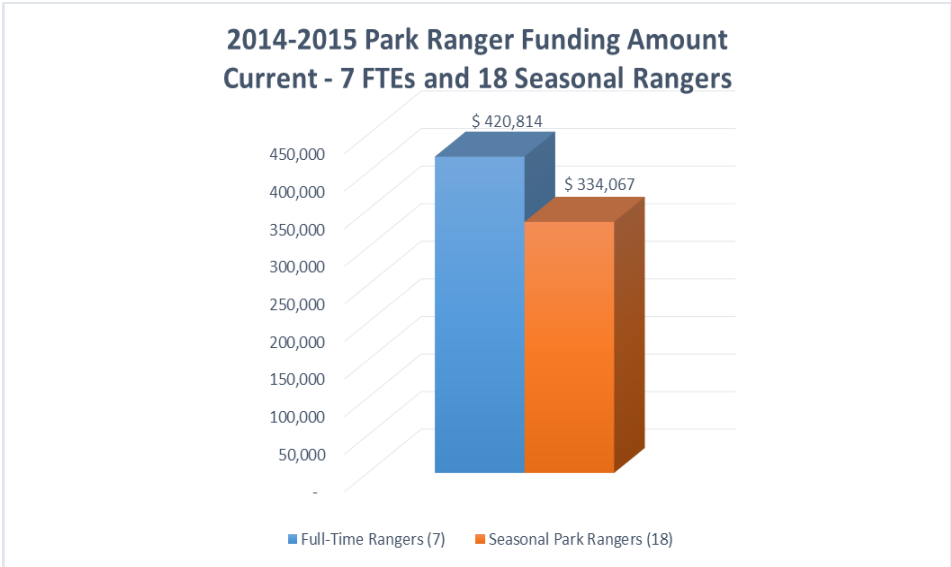
Today, the program has seven full-time and up to 18 seasonal rangers (six in the winter and 10-12 in spring/summer/fall). The nature of the work over the years has changed and issues emerging in today's parks system are more complex and time-consuming. In addition, assignments of rangers from a citywide program to dedicated parks and to bathroom lockup duties have led to a decrease in ranger presence east of the river. Though staffing levels have expanded, staff are dedicated to specific parks and tasks, which limit their capacity to address issues citywide.

As a result of both seasonal and full-time rangers joining Laborers 483, wages and benefits have increased significantly, particularly for the seasonal rangers. The fully-loaded cost per seasonal ranger went from approximately \$15 to \$22 per hour.



Current Funding and Staffing Level

PP&R has one ranger supervisor, seven full-time rangers, and up to 18 seasonal rangers (depending on the season) to cover over 11,000 acres of property. Between March and October, seasonal rangers are hired and teamed up with full-time rangers. This results in the formation of six to seven teams (each team generally consists of a minimum of two rangers for safety reasons) or up to 14 rangers on duty on a given day. The capacity of the rangers is divided between dedicated parks and citywide responsibilities. Parks with dedicated rangers are all west of the river and include all parks in the Central Business District, Forest Park, and Washington Park.

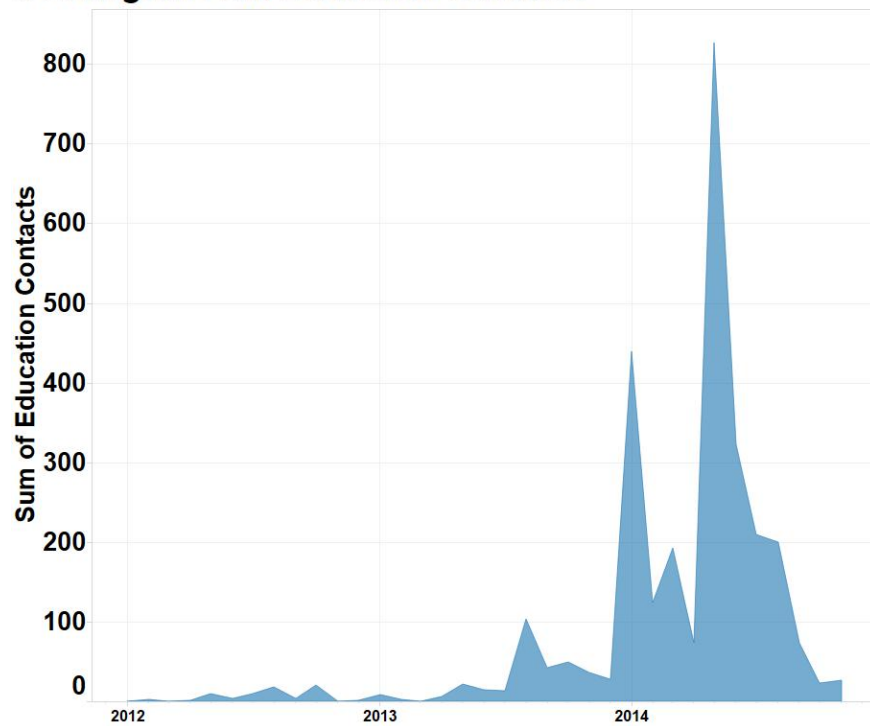


Due to the required distribution of rangers in dedicated parks, areas east of the Willamette River receive limited ranger services. Note that 86% of rangers are assigned to parks west of the river. While most of the ranger capacity is west of the river, many of the calls for service and emerging issues are being observed east of the river. Calls for service are contacts made by the general public with ranger dispatch, which was established in April of 2014. This dispatch system is very new and additional data analysis and outreach to residents to use dispatch for security issues is needed. Currently, dispatch receives approximately 200-300 calls for service per month, with 60% of calls on average, east of the river. It is worth noting that a majority of the calls for service are east of the river, with limited ability to assign rangers to that area. The dispatch function will be evaluated and reassessed as it matures and the information will help the program better align current staffing resources with emerging issues in the system.

Program Successes

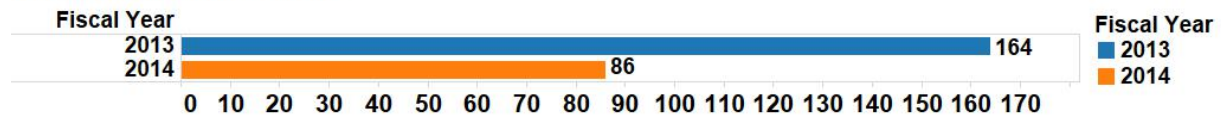
The Ranger program has received positive feedback from PP&R stakeholders, neighbors, police and park users. Over the last few years, the rangers have helped to decrease crime and nuisance activities in dedicated parks, have helped park users enjoy the system, and are in high demand citywide. For example, since January of 2014, the rangers have focused on a new assignment attached to high demand and dedicated funding in Washington Park. According to police data, the number of reported crimes for the Park has declined by approximately 50 percent. More research and information is needed to understand the link between ranger presence and crime statistics, but these early results are encouraging and suggest a positive relationship between the two measures.

Washington Park Education Contacts



Type I and II Offenses Reported at Washington Park

source: Portland Police Bureau



Other Ranger program successes include:

- Washington Park:
 - A decrease in chronically-inappropriate activity in Stearns Canyon and Hoyt Arboretum. Some of this unwanted activity includes drug and alcohol use, public intoxication, urinating in public, and littering.
 - A significant decrease in drug and alcohol use by underage drinkers at the Vietnam Memorial (known by local teenagers as “Party Hill”).
 - Successful traffic management during “Free Days” at the Zoo without major delays or incidents.

- Forest Park:
 - Increasing visits to Forest Park to follow up to a pipe bomb discovery in summer of 2014.

- Cleaning up camps and party debris in the Stone House area, the Thompson Gate area, and Upper Saltzman Road.
 - Conducting several search and rescue operations of missing children and adults who are experiencing disabilities.
- Holladay Park:
 - During the 2014 Holladay Park pilot program, ranger presence, combined with added recreational programs, led to a decrease in gang activity and park violations as well as an increase in positive behaviors and visits from local residents and businesses. As progress was made and work in the park continued, people from the community began to repopulate the park on a regular basis displaying positive behavior, further displacing and decreasing illicit activities.
- Providing a positive presence in North parks by supporting the Summer Playground Program. Rangers provided more than 1,100 hours of service by visiting North Portland parks over 2,700 times, which led to decreases in nuisance and unwanted activity during the summer playground program.
 - Responding to over 1,600 camping issues since January 2014. Most of these contacts have resulted in referrals to social and mental health services.
 - Posting and cleaning large camping sites located at Washington/Monroe, Springwater Trail, and along the Willamette River.

Program Outcomes and Performance Measures

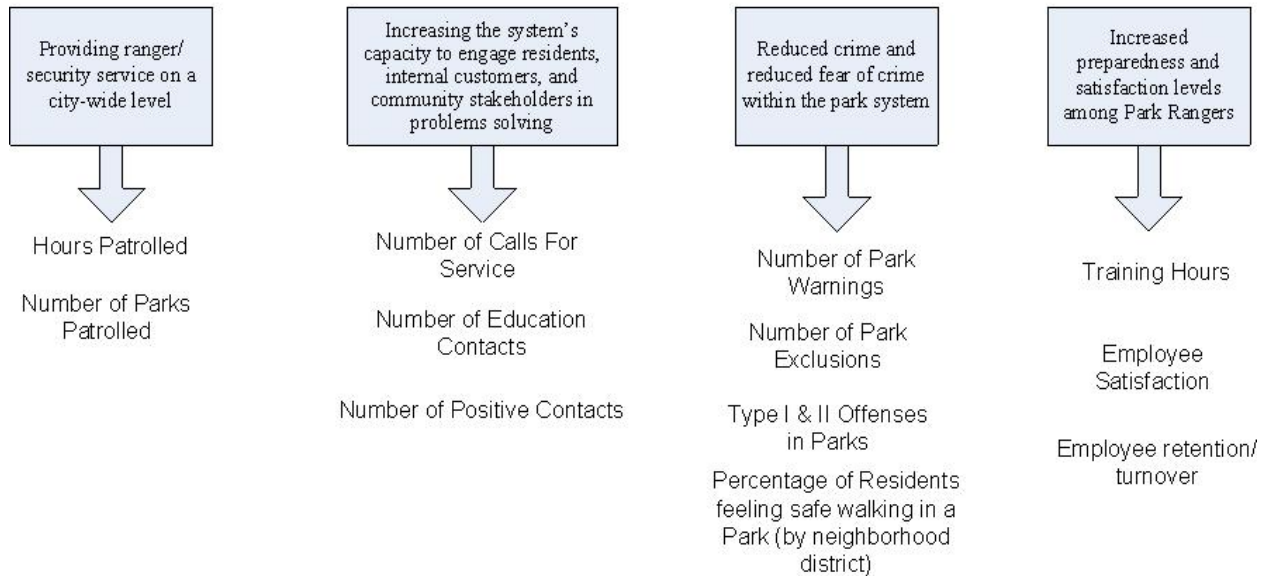
The following section provides an overview of program outcomes and performance measures. Most of the data used in this section is extracted directly from the rangers' daily reports. These daily reports include what the rangers see and address on their patrols and the impact they are making related to safety issues in the parks. It should be noted, that as the program's funding and staffing have fluctuated so did the numbers of activities reported by the rangers. For example, summer months have more seasonal rangers available to patrol the parks, as such more reports are generated. One-time funding to increase ranger capacity in 2012 carried to 2013 and created additional capacity to respond to and encounter more issues.

Additionally, the data tracking methodology and technology will need to be streamlined to have more meaningful and user-friendly reports available. These improvements are currently being implemented. For example, starting in January 2015, the rangers began using an updated daily activity log with an enhanced capacity to track the data consistently and reconcile calls for service with patrol outcomes.

The success of the program is measured in a number of ways including visits per park and patrol hours. These two measures need to be further defined to understand the data and patterns in program performance. The number of visits per park measures the number of times rangers are deployed there. For example, Lents Park does not have dedicated rangers. Rangers are deployed there based on calls for service. Knowing how many times the rangers go to a park helps the program flag demand for ranger presence and chronically reoccurring issues. For parks with dedicated rangers like Washington Park, visits alone do not tell a full story. In dedicated parks, total patrol hours (i.e. how much time the rangers are spending in the park) combined with how many issues and types of activities they address illustrates an impact of ranger presence on the property.

Park Ranger Program Desired Outcomes

And Related Performance Measures



The above visual represents desired program outcomes as well as a portfolio of performance measures that the bureau will use to track progress in each outcome area. Some measures identified above do not yet have data tracking systems in place. For purposes of this report the following measures and associated data are presented:

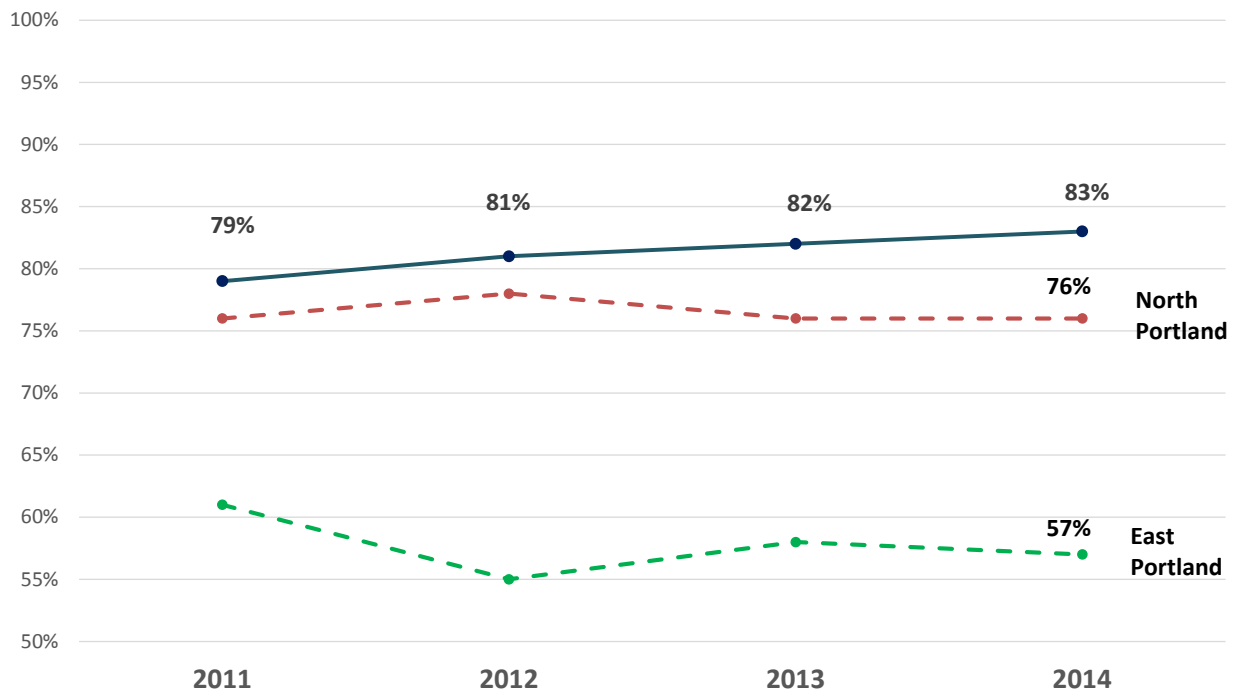
1. Percentage of residents feeling safe walking in a park alone
2. Total patrol hours the rangers provide in each park (ranger presence)
3. Parks visited on a monthly basis
4. The number of park warnings and exclusions
5. Dog Off Leash and Scoop Laws
6. The number of positive and educational contacts
7. Nuisance Abatements
8. Camping
9. The number of contacts that generate voluntary compliance with park rules (measure under development)

Finally, an overview of the most common park issues and violations encountered is included.

Resident Perceptions of Safety in Parks

One important measure of the program's success is the residents' perception of safety in parks. Based on the 2014 City Auditor's Service and Accomplishment Report, organized around coalition boundaries, the residents' perceptions about the safety of parks in the city has continued to increase steadily since 2011. Although the overall city trend is positive, resident perception of safety in parks east of the river is tracking behind. While Citywide, 83% of residents report feeling safe or very safe in parks, only 76% of residents in North Portland neighborhoods reported feeling safe or very safe walking alone in a park. In East Portland neighborhoods, the difference is more striking, with only 57% of residents reporting feeling safe walking in a park.

City Auditor's Resident Survey Percentage of residents feeling safe or very safe walking in a park alone during the day



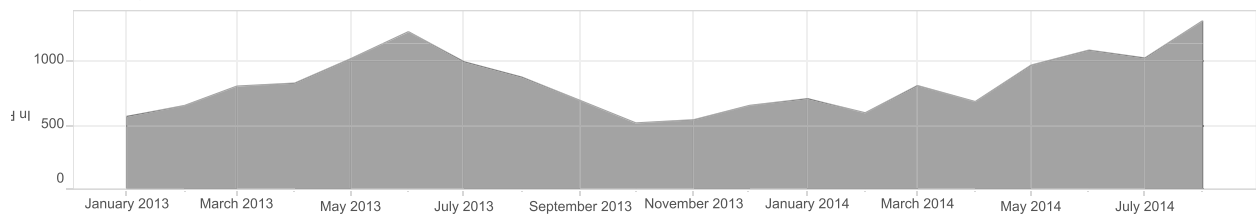
The lower satisfaction rates in North and East Portland may be related to the lack of consistent ranger presence and an increase in camping at Rocky Butte, Overlook, Lents, Washington Monroe Property, Springwater trail, and other parks.

Patrol Hours and Park Visitations

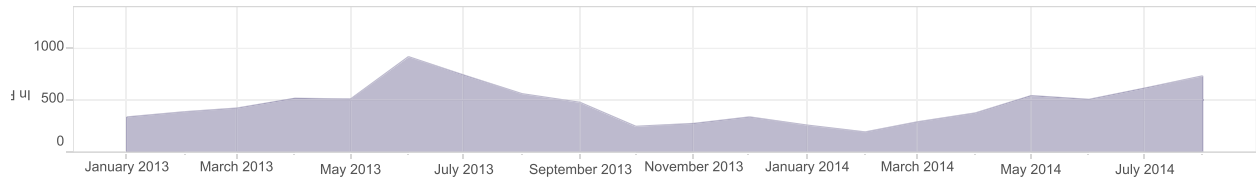
The rangers provide more than 40,000 hours of service per year. The chart below identifies areas with the highest patrol hours. Overall, park ranger patrol hours are trending based on the seasonal nature of work and funding available for the program. Additional funding for ranger positions in Washington Park, for example, positively increases the overall patrol hours. However, as noted earlier, those hours are directly linked to the park.

Park Ranger Patrol Hours

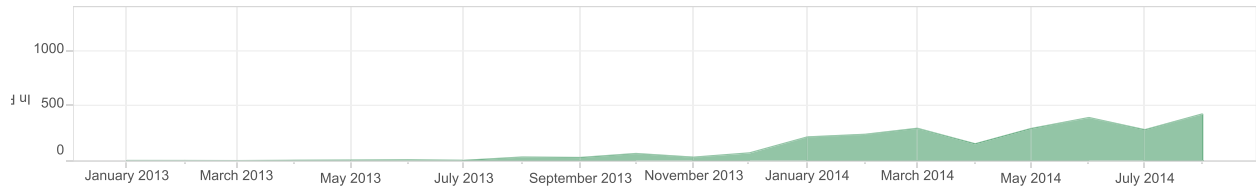
Total Hours by Month



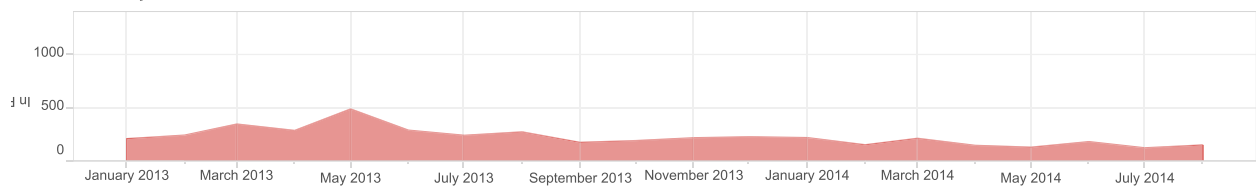
Total Hours by Month All Other Parks



Total Hours by Month Washington Park



Total Hours By Month CBD



In addition to patrolling dedicated parks, the rangers visit approximately 100 different properties per month. PP&R has over 200 parks in its portfolio. As noted earlier, rangers are assigned to dedicated parks and those parks are patrolled consistently. The program's response to parks east of the river is based on calls for service, hot spots, and requests from police or management. Redeployment of rangers from west to east has been done with management discretion in a reactive way to address issues after they emerge. This approach does not create consistent ranger presence on the east side of the city and has a limited impact.

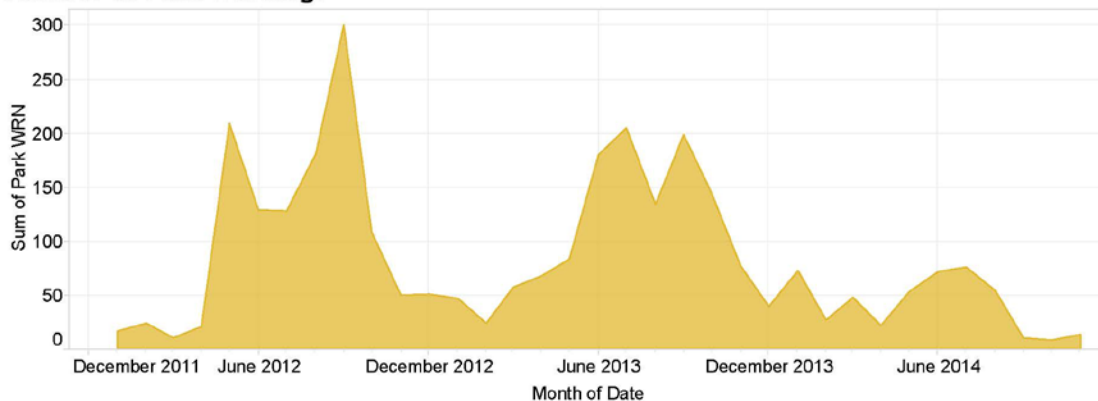
Top ten properties visited by rangers in 2013 and 2014 include:

| 2013 | 2014 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Colonel Summers Park | Gov. Tom McCall Waterfront Park |
| Gov. Tom McCall Waterfront Park | Washington Park |
| Washington Park | South Park Blocks |
| South Park Blocks | North Park Blocks |
| North Park Blocks | Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade |
| Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade | South Waterfront Park |
| South Waterfront Park | O'Bryant Square |
| O'Bryant Square | Couch Park |
| Mocks Crest Property | Washington-Monroe Property |
| Laurelhurst Park | Colonel Summers Park |

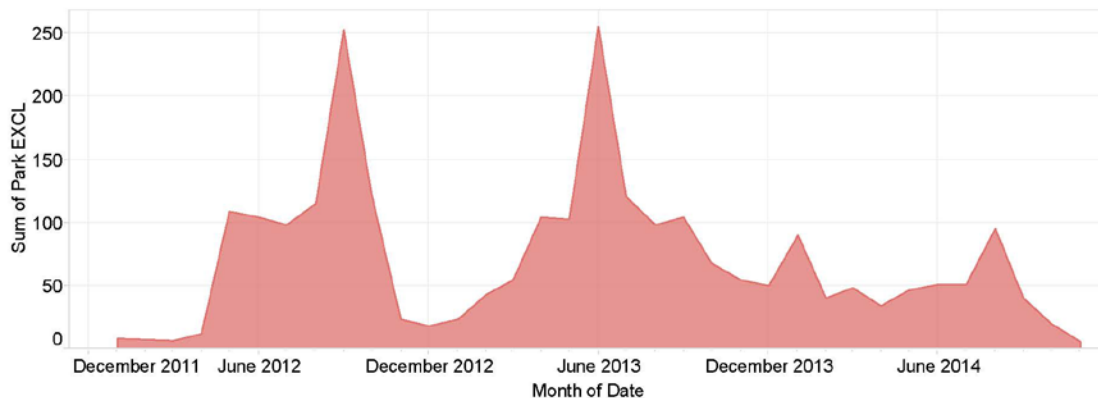
Park Warnings and Exclusions

Under City Code Title 20, in addition to attempting to gain voluntary compliance and other remedies, park rangers have the authority to exclude individuals from city parks for park rule violations. The chart below shows the number of warnings and exclusions issued on a monthly basis. The numbers in 2012 and 2013 are related to one-time funding, which led to a 300% increase in seasonal ranger capacity. As illustrated in the chart below, the rangers issue anywhere between 40 to 280 warnings and exclusions per month, which depends among other things on weather conditions and available staff. Individuals excluded from parks have an option to appeal.

Number of Park Warnings



Number of Park Exclusions



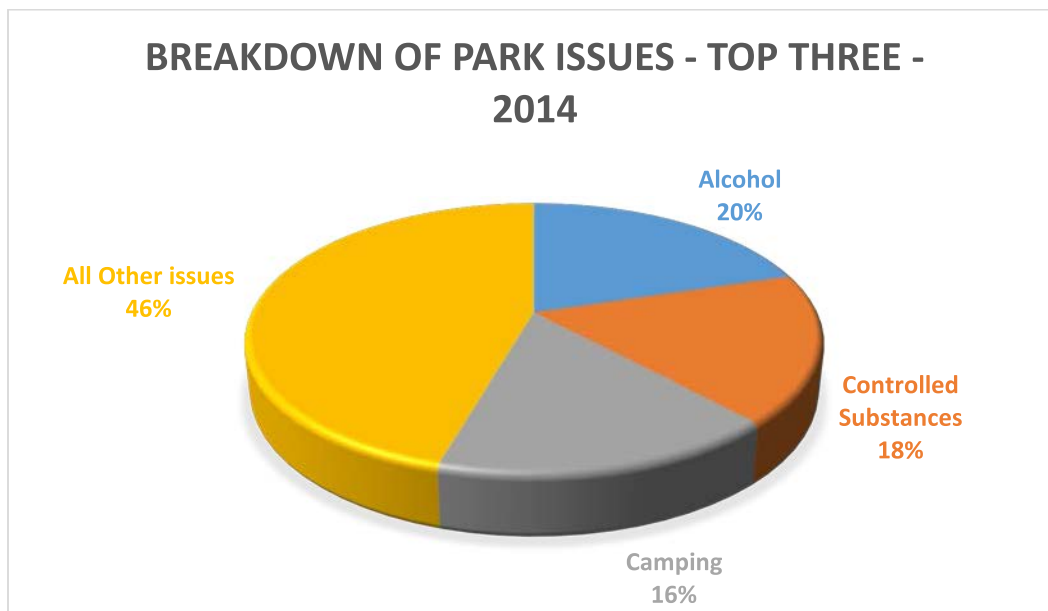
- The top three parks where exclusions and warnings were issued in 2014 include: Washington Park, Gov. Tom McCall Waterfront Park, and South Park Blocks.
- The top three reasons for a warning or exclusions include: Alcohol – 20.12.040-A; Controlled Substances in a Park – 20.12.040-B; Camping – 14A.50.020

Overview of Park Violations Encountered

Rangers address a number of different issues in parks. Among the top three are:

- Alcohol – consumption of alcohol in the park without permit
- Controlled Substances in a Park
- Camping – camping on parks property

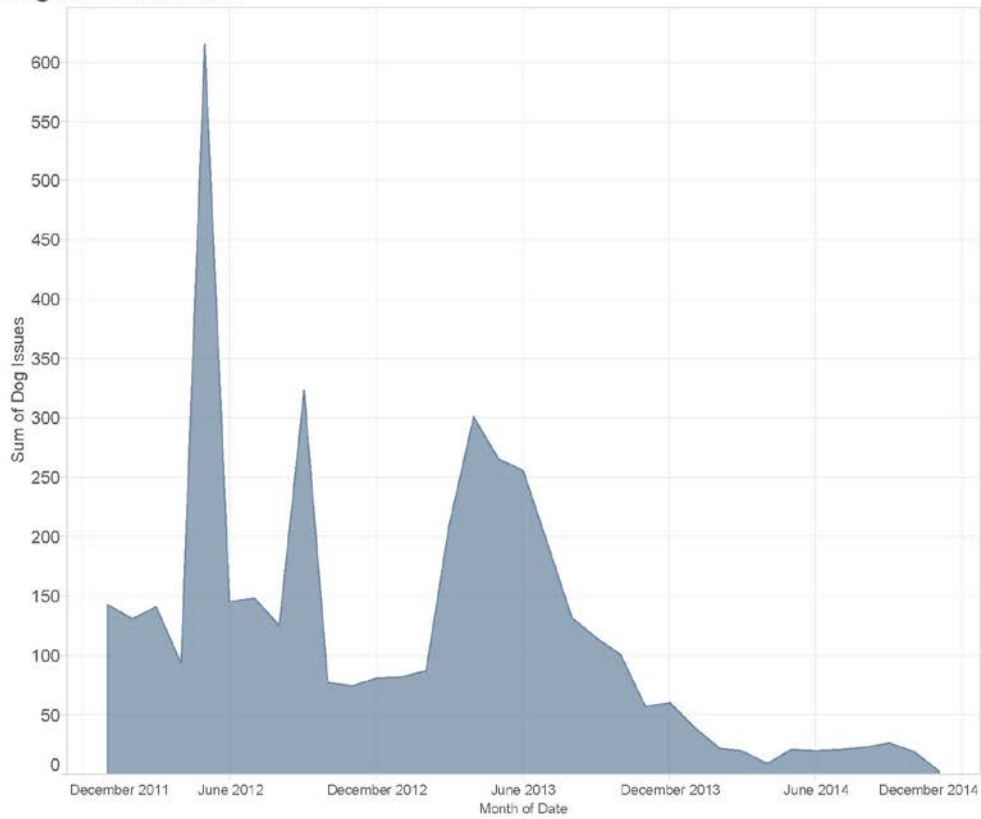
The next chart shows the percentage of warnings and exclusions issued by the rangers in 2014. Total number of warnings and exclusions is over 1,750:



Dog Off Leash and Scoop Laws

In 2013, City Council authorized park rangers to issue citations for leash and scoop law violations. The decision to give rangers the capacity to write citations was focused on intensive outreach and enforcement, specifically in low compliance parks. In parks where lack of compliance with leash/scoop law is an ongoing issue, PP&R does intensive outreach and enforcement to effect behavior change. The chart below shows a gradual decrease in citations which can be explained by a number of factors, including labor issues which have taken the authority to write citations from seasonal staff, larger staffing levels in 2013 specifically, and a decline in focused outreach efforts. In 2014, the program revenue from citations was at \$600.

Dog Issues All Parks

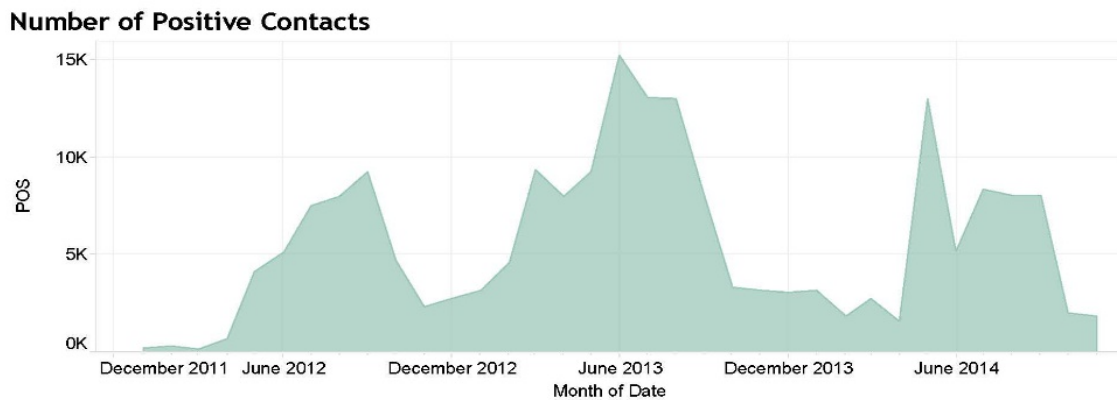
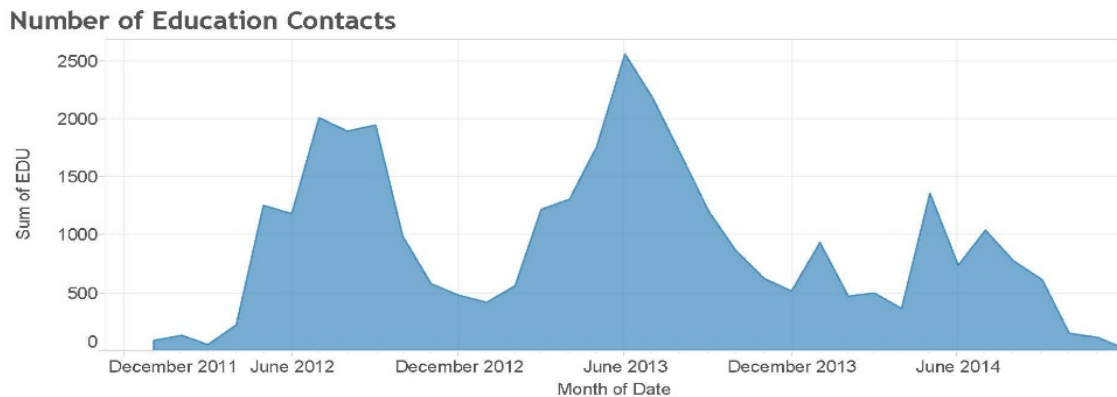


In winter 2014-15, rangers have also conducted additional outreach and enforcement missions related to leash and scoop law issues. This outreach was in collaboration with neighborhood groups, outreach staff, crime prevention, and Multnomah County Animal Control partners.

Positive and Educational Contacts

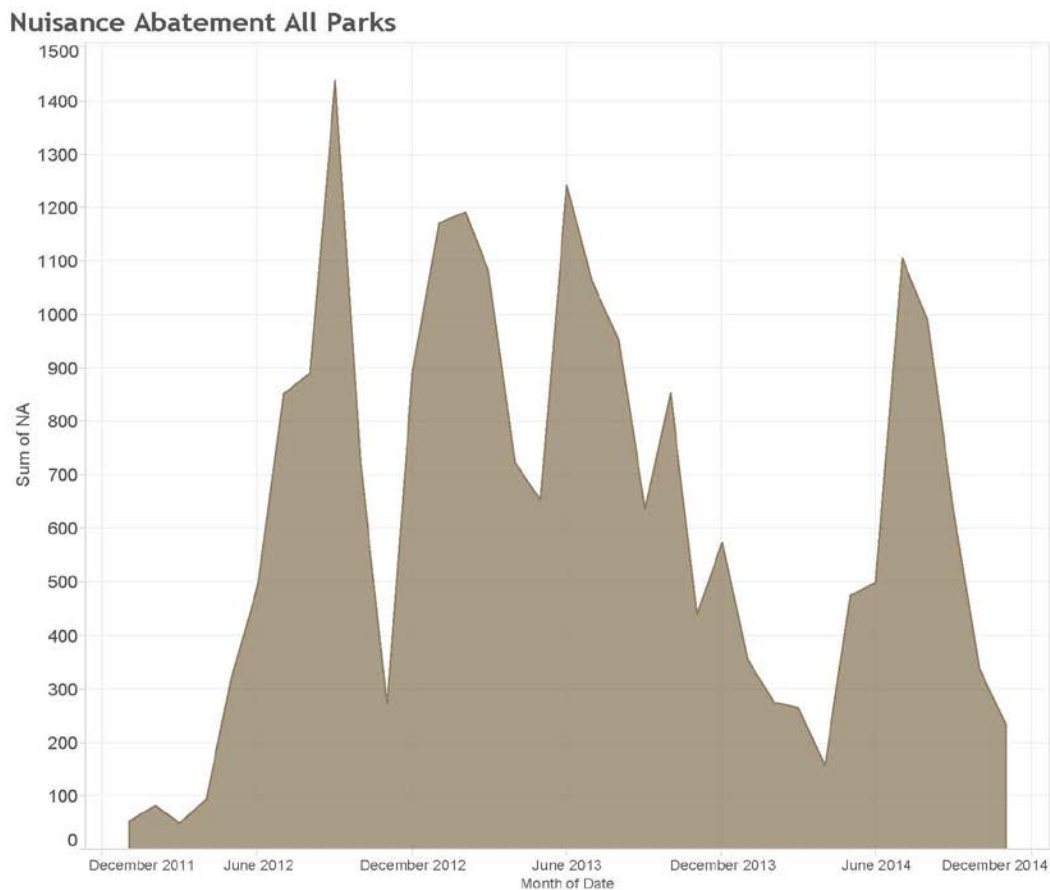
The primary role of each park ranger is to serve as an ambassador for Portlanders and the bureau. Rangers provide thousands of educational contacts per month with the highest proportion of contacts occurring during the summer. Educational and positive contacts make up a significant portion of the focus of the program and serve as measures of crime prevention.

The majority of the individuals that rangers make contact with are positive users who make the system vibrant and healthy. A significant percentage of contacts result in rangers having to educate users about park rules. When rangers make contact with individuals in violation of park rules, the goal is to generate voluntary compliance that results in the least amount of intervention by rangers and/or police. Voluntary compliance is recorded under educational contacts and contributes to the success of the ranger presence in parks. The chart below shows the number of positive and educational related contacts.



Nuisance Abatements

The chart below briefly illustrates the trend in nuisance activities addressed by the rangers citywide. It should be noted that the trend fluctuates based on the seasonal nature of work, dollars available for staffing, emerging trends, and dedicated park assignments. The trend is further influenced by the technology available to track data and data tracking methodology. Both issues will need to be researched and addressed on a long-term basis.

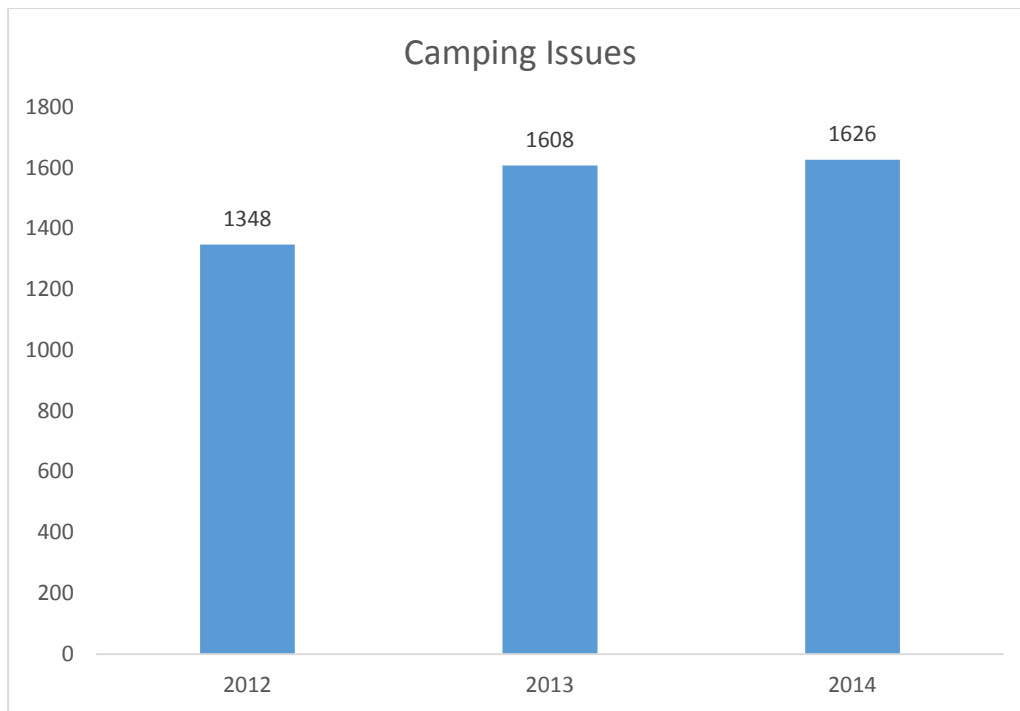


So far in 2014, the rangers addressed over 2,500 nuisance violations. By addressing nuisance activities in parks, police resources can be focused on crime while improving the community's overall perception of safety in the park. Nuisance activities the rangers address include:

- Trash pick-up and collection and disposal of hypodermic needles
- Vandalism and graffiti/Park user conflict

Camping

Camping in parks is an emerging issue. The rangers have been increasingly addressing campers in parks, including transient boaters mooring at city-owned docks. Ranger interventions include everything from providing campers with access to social services to posting and cleaning up of camps. PP&R also has solicited help from the Multnomah County Sheriff River Patrol to help address derelict boats, a newly emerging issue for the city. In 2014, the rangers encountered over 1,600 camping issues in parks with hotspots at Riverplace docks (north and south), Springwater Corridor Trail, Waterfront Park, the Washington-Monroe property in inner southeast Portland, Forest Park, and Washington Park. Overall, camping contacts the rangers make in parks have increased from about 1300 to 1600 in two years.



All rangers are trained to offer social services and gain voluntary compliance from campers. This proactive approach leads to 70% compliance with only one-third of interactions leading to camp cleanups.

Generating Voluntary Compliance (GVCs) with Park Rules

This measure is under development. Currently, the rangers track GVCs under educational contacts and are making plans to track GVCs separately. Gaining voluntary compliance with park rules is a progressive form of enforcement used by rangers to encourage positive patron behaviors in parks. Anecdotal data from rangers suggests

that four out of five people comply with park rules when educated about them. For example, at the Riverplace dock, the rangers reached out to a group of boaters in violation of the city's mooring code and park rules and most of the boaters complied without any escalation or enforcement. In fact, at least two boaters through the help of the rangers were connected with social services.

Conclusion

Portland Parks & Recreation's Rangers serve as goodwill ambassadors and are charged with providing information, gaining voluntary compliance and educating park users. In addition, the rangers resolve park user conflicts and enforce City Code. Since its inception in the early 1990's, the Ranger program has shown success in frequently visited and regularly patrolled parks including decreases in nuisance activities and crime.

This report has provided an overview and evolution of the Ranger program over time, including staffing and budget changes, as well as prior Council decisions that have led to the current state of the program. Specific program successes have been identified including recent accomplishments at Washington Park, Forest Park and Holladay Park.

An overview of desired outcomes for the Ranger program has been presented along with an overview of existing performance metrics and data tracking needs to measure success in the future.

The central issue facing the Park Ranger program in 2015 is an uneven level of service between parks west and east of the Willamette River. This results largely from past commitments to provide dedicated service at west side parks within the Central Business District and Washington Parks. 86% of the current Ranger staff is allocated to commitments west of the Willamette while only 36% of calls for service originate from west of the river. Recent data trends suggest that there are emerging needs at parks east of the Willamette River. Furthermore, residents' perceptions of safety at parks is much lower in Outer East and North Portland neighborhoods when compared to the rest of the City.

While PP&R has used one time dollars and management discretion to reactively assign ranger capacity to hot spots citywide, this model is not sustainable and needs to be addressed with additional Council guidance.

Options for Council may include the following:

- 1) Allowing PP&R management more flexibility from historic commitments to patrol Forest Park and the Central Business District (CCBD). This may include reduced service levels at west side parks, when appropriate, in order to better serve parks east of the river.
- 2) Maintaining existing service level west of the river and allocating additional resources to PP&R to increase the capacity of the Ranger program to proactively serve parks east of the river.
- 3) A combination of options one and two.

While the first option appears to be straightforward, it will not address the service equity issue east of the river in a sustainable way. This approach is enforcement heavy and does not create consistent ranger presence in hot spot parks. PP&R recommends that the Council consider option 3, which includes both releasing PP&R from historic commitments and increasing the number of rangers east of the river. The need for additional resources to increase Ranger capacity is mentioned in PP&R's 2015-16 budget request narrative, for Council's information, and in case more ongoing general funds become available. In order to create more equity between west and east areas of Portland, a minimum of seven full time rangers will need to be added to east side, a cost of approximately \$460,000.

In addition to requesting new resources, PP&R will take immediate action to implement the following next steps:

- The ranger program will create a business plan to guide its future development and operational decisions.
- The program will need to keep its seasonal component to address an increase in park violations during March – October. Also, the seasonal program provides for a diverse recruitment platform, which allowed the rangers to become more reflective of the community they serve. Since 2011, when the program staff were all white males, rangers have increased diversity by adding ethnically diverse, bilingual and female staff.
- PP&R will streamline customer service and dispatch needs of the ranger program. Currently, we have one seasonal dispatcher and need to build our capacity to further offer support to residents calling to report security concerns in city parks.
- Data Gathering and Quality – the program will work to centralize its data collection efforts and reduce duplication of data entry, thus increasing internal efficiencies. The next step is to develop an integrated daily activity phone application for the rangers in the field.

Agenda No.
REPORT
Title

Accept

Report to City Council on Portland Parks & Recreation Park Ranger Program. (Report)

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|--|---|
| <p>INTRODUCED BY Commissioner/Auditor: Fritz</p> | <p>CLERK USE: DATE FILED <u>MAR 06 2015</u></p> |
| <p>COMMISSIONER APPROVAL</p> <p>Mayor—Finance and Administration - Hales</p> <p>Position 1/Utilities - Fritz <i>TB</i></p> <p>Position 2/Works - Fish</p> <p>Position 3/Affairs - Saltzman</p> <p>Position 4/Safety - Novick</p> | <p>Mary Hull Caballero Auditor of the City of Portland</p> <p>By: <i>Mary Hull Caballero</i> Deputy</p> |
| <p>BUREAU APPROVAL</p> <p>Bureau: Parks & Recreation Bureau Head: <i>Mik Abbate</i></p> <p>Prepared by: Cynthia Castro Date Prepared: 3/4/15</p> <p>Impact Statement Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Amends Budget <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Portland Policy Document If "Yes" requires City Policy paragraph stated in document. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>City Auditor Office Approval: required for Code Ordinances</p> <p>City Attorney Approval: required for contract, code, easement, franchise, comp plan, charter</p> <p>Council Meeting Date 3/11/15</p> | |
| <p>ACTION TAKEN:</p> <p>MAR 11 2015 ACCEPTED</p> | |

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|---|
| AGENDA |
| <p>TIME CERTAIN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Start time: 10 AM</p> <p>Total amount of time needed: 30 minutes (for presentation, testimony and discussion)</p> |
| <p>CONSENT <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>REGULAR <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Total amount of time needed: <u> </u> (for presentation, testimony and discussion)</p> |

| FOUR-FIFTHS AGENDA | COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS: | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|------|
| | YEAS | NAYS |
| 1. Fritz | 1. Fritz ✓ | |
| 2. Fish | 2. Fish ✓ | |
| 3. Saltzman | 3. Saltzman ✓ | |
| 4. Novick | 4. Novick _____ | |
| Hales | Hales ✓ | |