

## **OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **STAFF REPORT**

**MEETING DATE:** September 18, 2017

**AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:** 3A

**STAFF:** David Navarro, Park Operations Superintendent  
Jennifer Budge, Parks and Recreation Director

**REQUEST:** **For Discussion Only:** Updates on the department's new organizational structure including discussion on staff recruitment and the Park Ranger Program

#### **GENERAL DISCUSSION:**

The Board of Supervisors adopted the budget for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, which included reorganization of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department (see attached organizational chart). Through the strategic planning process, it was determined that restructuring certain portions of the department was needed to reduce duplication, increase efficiencies, create balance and equity across the organization, improve interdepartmental communication, and reduce silos. Some areas in particular include: downgrading the Deputy Director position to a Parks Superintendent (cost savings to park maintenance labor), reclassifying a Recreation Manager to a Recreation Superintendent and moving the two Park Rangers under one supervisor.

The intent of this item is to provide an update on the development of the Park Ranger program for the Carson City Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department. The major goal for this program is for the Park Rangers to serve as a more cohesive unit and to streamline communication efforts. The new organizational plan approved by the board identifies the Park Rangers now be reporting to the Parks Operations Superintendent, David Navarro, rather than reporting to two separate individuals.

The change was implemented to provide an opportunity for both of our Park Rangers to work together in a more cohesive environment without worrying about territorial boundaries between the Parks Division and Open Space Division. In addition, both of the Park Rangers will be assigned all of the open space and park properties during their regular shifts and will now collaborate on patrols, incidents and educational opportunities with the public. The Park Rangers will be sharing all materials with one another and communicating on a regular basis on the conditions and activities within the Parks, Recreation and Open Space properties.

Staff is actively working through the transition and look to be fully functional as a single unit by the week of September 18<sup>th</sup>. Staff will be coordinating with Ann Bollinger, Open Space Administrator, and her team on the needs of the Open Space program and properties and applying that to the new Park Ranger collaboration. Both of the Park Rangers are looking forward to the change and are ready to implement existing and new strategies to manage the

Open Space and Park facilities for Carson City. Some initial goals of the program are:

- Improved inter-departmental communication
- Improved city-wide collaboration including consistent policies and procedures with citation authority (Code Enforcement and Animal Services)
- Implementing outreach and education opportunities with a focus on youth in the community
- Improved communication with the Sheriff's Office, Nevada Department of Wildlife and other enforcement agencies

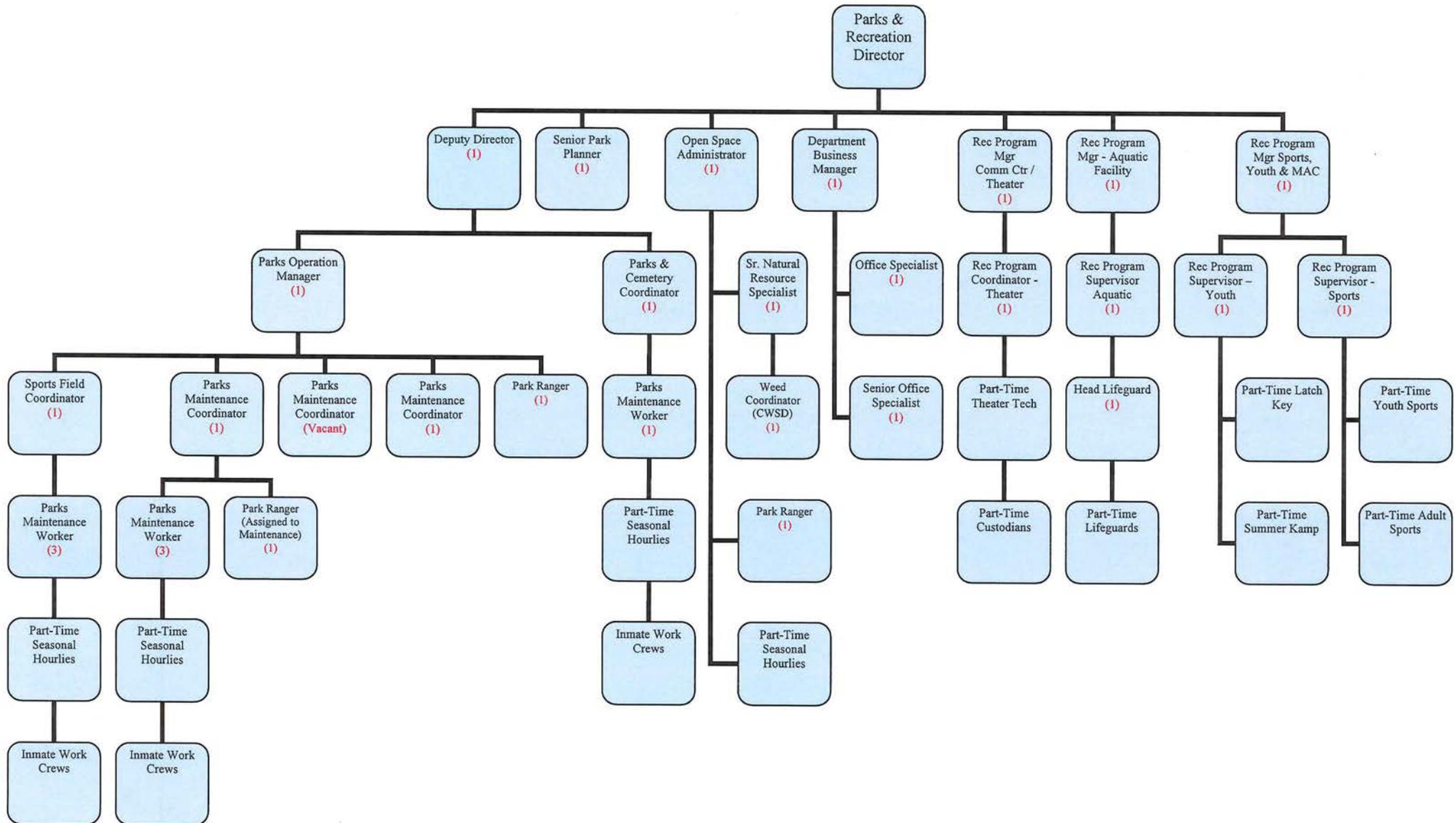
Also attached, please find a memo from Ranger Costello regarding his activities throughout the last year.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** This agenda item is for informational purposes only. No formal action can be taken at this time.

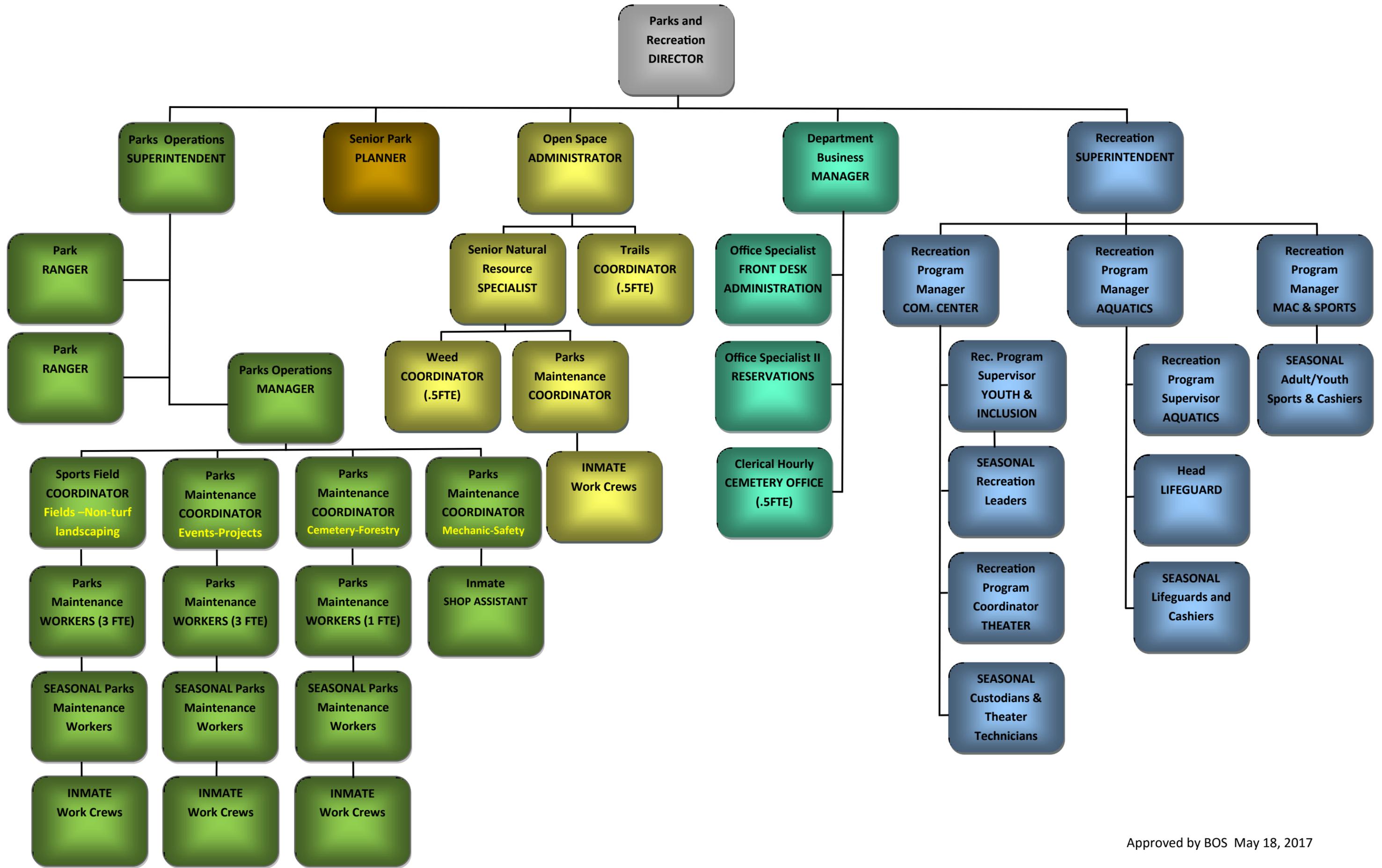
# Carson City Parks & Recreation Department

## Functional Organizational Chart

3-10-16



# Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space Department—ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE





# Memo

**To:** Open Space Advisory Committee  
**From:** John Costello, Park Ranger *John J. Costello*  
**cc:** Ann Bollinger, Open Space Administrator  
**Date:** September 18, 2017  
**Re:** Park Ranger Report

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I, John Costello, have been the Open Space Park Ranger for Carson City, Parks Recreation and Open Space for just about two years now. My schedule for work goes as the sun does. For much of the last four months, my schedule has been 12:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. That is because it is my job is to close parks, facilities, and educate the public on what time they need to vacate our parks and open spaces. We have sufficient signage in our areas that are dawn to dusk, but as I'm sure you all well know, not everybody pays much attention to informational signage. Therefore, by patrolling many of these areas at dusk, it cuts down on our risk for rule and regulation violations.

As far as a Park Ranger's typical day on the job, there really isn't one, especially on the weekend. Once you go on-duty for that day, you aren't exactly sure what you may encounter out in the field. Much of my week days consist of planning, patrol, maintenance related tasks, and follow up with certain agencies/companies that the Park Rangers work closely with. Week days are when I take the opportunity to work with inmates or maintenance personnel in order to take care of maintenance issues, such as facility maintenance, sign construction, trash pick-up, or dump site clean-up. Thankfully, this year the open space division hasn't had as much of an issue as last year regarding our rule and regulation signs, specifically in Carson River Canyon. Last year we had a problem with sign vandalism and destruction back in the canyon on a consistent basis. This year, we have only had damage to a few signs in all of our open space areas. I would like to believe that the open space division can attribute the decrease in vandalism to education, pro-activeness, and an enforcement presence. We also have had to put more signs up this year due to all of the damage that occurred during the heavy rainfall we received during the winter.

As far as weekends go for rangers, it is a whole different world from weekdays. On weekends, much of our time is spent out in the field checking on events and enforcing rules and regulations in parks and open spaces. Considering much of our open space property was transferred over from BLM in a conservation easement, there are many educational contacts that are made to advise the public of the change in ownership and the new set of rules and regulations that are now in place. Much of what occurs for Park Rangers on the weekends include public relation contacts, which includes providing information and assistance to parks

and open space users. Much of that information includes historical, off-roading, fishing, trail conditions/difficulty, and much more.

There are violations, and even crimes that occur in our parks and open spaces. I know I can speak for the department when I say we are grateful to have the support of the Carson City Sheriff's Office. As Park Rangers for the city, we work closely with Carson City deputies, as well as the Carson City dispatch center. Our dispatch center is the same as the sheriff's office. The dispatchers are always checking to make sure that we are safe out in the field. The dispatch center provides us with a lifeline when we are in areas that don't have cell reception, as well as within the city. They provide us with information while out in the field that we wouldn't be able to obtain otherwise. They provide us with vehicle registration information if we are to come across a suspicious vehicle in an area. They provide us with driver's license information if we are out with a subject that is in violation, just so we know exactly who we are making contact with. We have worked with deputies on a number of different incidents/situations which include investigations, stolen vehicles, homeless camps, search and rescue, and traffic control. It is always reassuring to know that we can rely on the sheriff's office to back us up if needed.

The most common violations that occur in our open spaces are shooting, camping, camp fires and dumping. When I wrote this report last year, all of these violations were a common occurrence. As I stated previously in the report, due to our pro-activeness and enforcement presence, the number of violations have decreased. We can also attribute the decrease in violations specifically related to shooting and camp fires, to the increase in fire danger over the last year, as well as the information being put out by other agencies informing the public on the heightened fire danger. Due to the amount of rain fall that the area received over the last winter, the amount of vegetation in open spaces areas seemed to have tripled. The contacts being made for violations in areas such as Carson River Canyon have decreased significantly. Since January 2017 our incident report records show that we have had eleven vandalism violations, five transient/ homeless camp violations, and eleven illegal dump site violations in all open space and park areas reported by Park Rangers. These records do not show instances where I am able to make contact with a subject for a violation in open space areas. I have noticed with our increased enforcement presence in open space areas, specifically Carson River Canyon, a family atmosphere in beginning to show in the area. More people are recreating responsibly, people feel safe having a picnic or family get together in the area, as well as the increased presence of families fishing along the river. We're continuing to see progress in the area towards our ultimate goal, which is a safe, fun area where people can enjoy the outdoors.

Some of the more fun and exciting things that happen in our open spaces are programs and special events. On August 13th of this year we had our Jazz & Beyond Festival out at Silver Saddle Ranch. The festival consisted of three unique bands and one amazing Native American dance group: CW & Dr. Spitmore, Sierra Sweethearts, Sagebrush Rebels Band, and Eagle Wings Pageant Dance Group. It was estimated that approximately 300 people came out to enjoy the event. On June 10<sup>th</sup> of this year, myself and local Boy Scout Troop 341 led an effort to give the "C" on C-Hill a new makeover. Our objective was to clear vegetation, move the painted rocks back into their original position, and paint the "C". Parker Lehmann, a member of Boy Scout Troop 341, spearheaded the beautification of the "C" for his final eagle scout project. Overall there were approximately 25 people helping with the project including myself, Boy Scout Troop 341, volunteers and parents. Carson City, along with various community partners pitched in for the clean-up effort, including Carson City Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department, which provided the Community Clean-Up Trailer; Louie Jones Painting, which provided a gas powered paint machine; Roy Houghton Construction, which helped with applying new paint to the rocks; as well as 3M and the Nevada Department of

Transportation which donated paint. The "C" looks better than ever thanks to Parker Lehmann and Boy Scout Troop 341. Some programs that you all can look forward to in our open spaces will be a Fall Colors Hike on October 21st at Carson River Park and a Sunset Hike to Prison Hill on September 23rd at the Koontz Trailhead. More information regarding these programs and others is advertised in the Fall Programs Guide for the Carson City Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department. The department has just recently hired on through VISTA and the Truckee Meadows Park Foundation, a Community Education Coordinator, Danielle Hatch. I am the direct supervisor for this position, as well as for the Volunteer Coordinator position. We now have a unique opportunity to utilize a position that was much needed for the department so we can provide the community with interpretive programs and much more.

I'm extremely grateful for my experiences thus far with the Carson City Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department. I have had the opportunity to refine and develop many skills that it takes to be a great Park Ranger and leader in the community. I have been through a training course with Nevada Division of State Parks and Washoe County Sheriffs that went over defense tactics and making contacts in the field. I am a member of the Park Rangers Association of California and had the amazing opportunity of attending their conference this year, as well as their conference last year. There were discussions at the conference on the future of parks, as well as connecting the tech sectors and parks. There were trainings on Leave No Trace, and how to educate your park users about the importance of "pack it in, pack it out". As far as medical training, I have been certified in Wilderness First Aid, CPR, and Law Enforcement Casualty Care. I have been a part of Trail Crew Leader training, radio training, specific equipment training, inmate training, supervisory training, ATV training, Weed Warriors training, mandated reporter training, defensive driver training, Taser certification/ training, and other various law enforcement trainings, all in order to keep me safe in the field. I am extremely proud to represent Carson City as one of their Park Rangers. I'm excited for the future of the program because I can see first-hand the direction in which it is headed. I'm grateful for the opportunity that I have been given and I'm looking forward to my future with Carson City.