



MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Preserving & Protecting Parks & Open Space



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District Rangers working across our parks.

Trail Maintenance & Reconstruction

An Interview with Our Rangers

Recently, we sat down with MPRPD's Rangers Caine Camarillo, Jacob Sanderson, Ira Comello, and Hatton Vandervort to learn more about their role in ensuring our trails and parks are safe and accessible for all. In our interview, we learned about their work in trail design, construction, maintenance, and in some cases, reconstruction. Read on to learn more about their vital contributions to our parks and their dedication to reopening the Cliff Trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park.

Q: How are you notified of trail issues, like the one you all resolved on the Cliff Trail at Garland Ranch?

Ira: The majority of the time we receive reports to our Ranger-on-Duty number ((831) 659-4488 x1), which is posted on our maps at the Visitor Center and the Discovery Center at our parks. So if somebody's hiking on the trail and they see a tree down or a slide, they'll call and leave a

message or we'll receive an email. We also have a pretty tight-knit community and regulars that visit our parks frequently. They know how to access us, notify us, and inform us when there's a problem—which we very much appreciate—so we can then jump in and fix the problem to make the parks as safe for the public as we can.

Q: What are the steps you follow or the process once an issue is brought to your attention?

Hatton: When we are notified of an issue, we'll assess the situation and come up with a plan on whether we need to close the trail or not. For example, when we learned about the large oak tree that fell on Cliff Trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park, we closed the trail because it was unsafe for the public. Once the decision to close the trail was determined, we then brainstormed different ways to address the issue. Sometimes it's necessary to bring in imported materials to fix the problem, but in this case we were able to use materials that were on site.

Jacob: Like Hatton mentioned, we really try to utilize native materials when we rebuild or construct trails—native rock, native soil—so it blends in with the rest of the trail and the surrounding environment. When we repaired the Cliff Trail, we went out and looked for native rock across the park to collect to rebuild the trail. This allows the trail to maintain consistency with the rest of the trail and the flora and fauna of the park as a whole. We're not just bringing in different colored material or various colored rocks, we keep it as native as possible so it all just blends in with its natural environment.

Caine: I'd like to add that we definitely work really well as a team to come up with a game plan and a list of materials and items that we need in order to complete the project. Usually, we're in very remote locations and you can't just go back real quick if you forgot something. You really have to make a checklist and review the overall plan first to make sure that you have everything you need once you're out there, because there's no general store right around the corner for what we do. We have to make sure we're prepared: plan for the worst and hope for the best.

Q: For this project in particular, can you share a bit about the skills Rangers like yourselves need to utilize to design, construct, maintain, and rehabilitate trails at Garland Ranch?

Jacob: The outdoors have always been a passion of mine. Once I got hired as a Ranger for MPRPD, I was able to learn valuable trail construction and maintenance to ultimately keep a safe environment for the public. While learning from my existing team members, each Ranger is also able to attend trail classes that California State Parks put on to learn about trail layout and design, budgeting, different techniques for building bridges and puncheons, and even how to rig with cable and high lines to move heavy material to your construction area. I'd also add that being handy and a quick problem solver is a huge asset to being a Ranger. You're often out in the backcountry, and if a hydraulic hose breaks on the tractor you have to be able to work on a solution quickly. We always keep in mind that anything we do to our trails is for the public. At the

end of the day, we want safe trails, so we do whatever we can to have a safe environment for our users and hikers to come out and enjoy.

When we first heard about the issue at the Cliff Trail, we went out to find a big oak tree had fallen on the edge of the trail, which is a narrow, single track trail, wide enough for only one person to walk on at a time, and uprooted the entire trail—pretty much destroying it and roughly 20-30 feet expansion of trail was undermined and ripped out. Our team was able to analyze the surrounding area and see where we could utilize existing, native rock and soil—which is the best case scenario. We were able to harvest rock on the hillside to fill in the large hole, and then we used a backfill of native dirt from the same hillside just above the slide. Once the dirt was pulled down, we recapped and reshaped it to connect the two ends of the trail back together. Next, we had to bring it back up to grade and capped it with soil. Then we come in and we rehab it with surrounding leaf litter. So we'll grab dead branches and nearby leaves that have fallen and we'll scatter it where we freshly moved dirt and soil to make it look like we'd never been there to make it appear like it was undisturbed. We were successful in this as the woman who actually first reported the Cliff Trail issue said she didn't even notice our repair. This is our exact objective when we do trail work: do a good job no matter what it is, and then rehab it to a state that makes it appear like you haven't even been there.

Caine: A lot of people say they want to be a Ranger, but it's not that easy. Our team works so hard and is so dedicated to keeping our public safe. The ability to do a damage assessment and a needs assessment, like we did on the Cliff Trail, and then transition into the problem-solving phase as it relates to erosion control measures, wood retaining walls or foundation retaining structures, water drainage, and outsliping are all top of mind for us in terms of maintaining trails for long-term sustainability. Best management practices are always a priority when it comes to bridges, trees, and vegetation.

Trail maintenance is just one aspect of our role. There's power tool and equipment operation that happens as well. In addition, we'll be called upon to supervise a crew that is made up of inmates or volunteers which is sometimes more difficult, because you're supervising 12-15 members of a crew as opposed to just yourself and your partner. When we're supervising, we also need to scope out the proper materials to use for the project, calculate how much of that material you need, and then determine if it's beyond our capability. Do we need to hire a contractor for this project or can we address this project in-house? And again, all this is done in the interest of public accessibility and safety. And as Jake said, I want to re-emphasize that our team doesn't just do this work, we are also here to enforce park rules and regulations. In addition, we do the majority of the public interfacing because we're out here every single day and we're making connections every single day. I'm honored to lead such an amazing team of Ranger staff. MPRPD wouldn't be what it is without these gentlemen.

Q: Why is trail maintenance and reconstruction so important?

Hatton: In the winter, for example, we're able to go out and watch where water wants to go naturally. Our observations allow us to identify what we need to do, whether it be to outslope the

trail, adding drainage dips, so that we can get out ahead of any issues. Our work is important for the public because the trails are here for them. The more we can keep all of our trails open and the more access the public can have, that benefits everyone in the long run. Our maintenance schedules are key to keeping up with the over 50 miles of trails accessible at Garland. There are certain times of the year when we have specific tasks we do just to keep up with the maintenance side of the trails in the park.

Jacob: I'd like to add that we're not just a maintenance crew, but we're also Law Enforcement Rangers too. Not only do we maintain trails and the infrastructure on district property, we also enforce district policy rules and regulations. For example, we respond to any type of incident that involves park district property like hiker injuries and even dog issues out on the land. When we do trail work, public safety is our number one priority. When trees fall down across a trail or there's a landslide or erosion issue on a trail, we're addressing those for the safety of the public.

About Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District

The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) has been preserving and protecting parks and open space since 1972. MPRPD is committed to being an inspirational, inclusive, respected, sustainable, and valued open space district that collaborates with and serves the community, and its conservation needs through interconnected open spaces, public parks, education, and advocacy for the entire community. For more information on the MPRPD and its mission, vision, and open spaces, please call 831.372-3196 or visit www.mprpd.org.



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