

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
Department of Recreation and Parks

February 15, 2012

TO: BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

FROM: 
JON KIRK MUKRI, General Manager

SUBJECT: OPERATIONS BRANCH – UPDATE ON DEPARTMENT’S
REORGANIZATION

The Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) has faced many challenges since its beginnings in 1889. The Department’s significance to the residents of Los Angeles and their quality of life was seen as important then, and has become even more important today. In 1925 the City Charter recognized RAP as a major priority for the City by granting the Department a fixed annual allocation of funds for its many operations. Additionally, the Charter granted RAP and the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners control over their funds. This ensured that all funding from all sources would only be used for the financial support of RAP.

Since that time, RAP has weathered the many ups and downs of the Nation’s and City’s economy, while continuing to provide a variety of high quality services at low or no cost to the public. Even with the continued effects of Proposition 13, numerous fluctuating economies, and several man-made and natural disasters, RAP has maintained its position as the finest municipal recreation and parks department in the Nation, if not the world.

Unfortunately, the City’s current fiscal crisis has taken a toll deeper than any other in the Department’s history. The continuance of serious budget reductions, as well as forced balancing measures has left very little flexibility in the Department’s operational budget. As a result, it has been necessary for RAP to make reductions in services that continue to affect every resident in every community of our City.

RAP’s discretionary operating budget consists of labor costs of approximately 85%. Since Fiscal Year (FY) 2007-2008 the Mayor and City Council directed RAP to absorb over \$100 million in indirect costs that were previously covered from the City’s General Fund budget. Basically, over the last few years RAP has had to function with an operating budget at least 25% less towards available services and programs.

To meet these budgetary challenges while still providing quality services, a clear organizational span of control and a streamlined organization was required. RAP management, in collaboration

with its Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners (Board), recently implemented a complete organizational re-structuring (reorganization). This reorganization took into consideration the loss of several hundred personnel as a result of layoff, the City's early retirement program, and normal attrition, without backfill authority. The current RAP organization has three major operational branches: the Operations Branch; the Planning, Construction and Maintenance Branch; and the Partnership Branch; as well as an Administrative Branch.

The information contained in this Report is intended to update the Board regarding Operations Branch, as well as outline some of its major accomplishments since the implementation of the reorganization.

At the onset of the reorganization, the management team of Operations Branch met with Department staff to set several operational goals. These goals were intended to meet budgetary requirements and set standards of operation. The following is an outline of the 2011 goals, as well as an update on their completion.

Operational Goal No. 1 – Develop and Implement a Restructured Recreation Operations Organizational Plan

- Operations Branch moved into the new organization on February 28, 2011.
- The new Operations Branch management staff began meeting regularly in March 2011.
- Recreation field operations were right-sized on a citywide basis to place staff in proper positions and to increase efficiency.
- The Department eliminated direct RAP programming at the two Multi-Purpose Senior Centers, which, in turn were permitted to independent non-profit service providers.

Operational Goal No. 2 – Implement a Plan for Program and Facility “Clustering” Based on Operational Challenges in Staffing Ratios, the Reduction of Available Service Hours, and Expanded Span of Control

- Clusters were created in all regions.
- Examples include: Watts Cluster, Martin Luther King Cluster, Balboa/Encino/Pedlow, and Woodland Hills.
- Hours of operations at most recreation centers were reduced.

- Operations at many senior centers were heavily reduced; specifically Felica Mahood and Wilkinson (as mentioned above with the elimination of the Multi-Purpose Senior Centers).

Operational Goal No. 3 – Review and Discuss the Possibility to Reimburse up to 17 General Funded Positions by Using Fee Generated Revenue at 10 Recreation Facilities

- Beginning in July 2011, the direct salary costs for 17 full-time recreation positions began the process of offsetting revenues generated from fee-based programming at 10 recreation centers Department-wide. The 10 participating recreation centers were selected based on demonstrated ability to generate fee-based revenue and strong community support. To this point, recreation staff assigned with the task to making "Direct Cost" a successful venture has exceeded expectations using innovative and creative marketing strategies, professionalism, and "old fashion elbow grease."

Operational Goal No. 4 – Consolidate Special Use and Picnic Permits under Park Services in as Many Locations as Possible

- Over the last year, the Park Services Division added to its responsibilities, the permitting of outdoor events in Barnsdall Park and the Brand Park Community Center.

Operational Goal No. 5 – Operate Summer Day Camp Programs as Closely as Possible to the Past Two Years

- Almost all of the recreation centers that offered summer day camp programs in 2009 and 2010 did so in 2011. Although fees were increased at many sites, the number of registrants did not significantly drop. The amount of General Fund subsidies were again reduced this past year. This affected allocated part-time hours, and some play supply/arts and craft funds. However, the recreation staff did provide quality programs for their communities.

Operational Goal No. 6 – Prepare for and Execute the Summer Night Lights (SNL) Program

- The CLASS (Clean and Safe Spaces) Park staff, along with recreation center staff, once again did an excellent job in executing the Mayor's SNL program; even while the number of SNL program sites was increased by the Mayor from 24 to 32 SNL sites. Through hard work and dedication, RAP staff continued to coordinate with numerous City agencies, the Los Angeles Police Department, and the Mayor's Office to offer a number of fun and exciting activities throughout the summer of 2011.

Operational Goal No. 7 – Re-align Resources Throughout Operations Branch as Necessary to Ensure that Resources are being Utilized Efficiently and Effectively

- Many technical fund corrections and transfers of resources occurred in the Operations Branch during the last year. These budgetary modifications were done in an effort to realign resources and to make them available in communities where they are most needed.

Highlights of Operations Branch Division Accomplishments

Recreation Operations

Recreation Operations has maintained a three region framework to manage Valley, Metro, and Pacific region operations. With the focus on core functions, Recreation Operations continues to provide quality programming for youth and adults throughout the City with sports and cultural activities, programs for seniors, and community events. The Department's six museums (Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, Maritime Museum, Banning Museum, Point Fermin Lighthouse, Civil War Drum Barracks, Fort MacArthur Military Museum) saw over 500,000 visitors in 2011.

2011 Recreation highlights include:

- Successful SNL program
- Sportsmanship And Coaches Workshops Program
- CLASS Parks delivery of teen and after school programming
- Chivas At The Park
- Valley Region Festivals
- Continued collaboration on projects with Partnership Division
- Municipal Sports revenue development (\$3 million in 2011)
- Youth Summer Nutrition Program
- Citywide Senior Citizen Section – 90 Plus Celebration
- 2011 LA Kids Free Basketball Clinics
- 2011 LA Kids Free Summer Sports Academy
- 2011 LA Kids Free Winter Basketball Camp
- LA Kids Pilot Program
- Pershing Square – Downtown on Ice and summer concert series
- Los Angeles Clippers summer basketball clinics – 2,000 youth participated citywide

Park Services Division

Park Services provides entertainment and recreational activities to the public by managing and operating a series of revenue generating facilities throughout the City. In FY 2010-2011, Park Services generated \$4.5 million of revenue for the Department.

Park Services Operations:

- Pay Tennis Program – eight pay for play tennis courts; 98,000 hours of court time sold annually; special use permits
- Rental Halls – supply affordable meeting places for the community; provide venues for weddings, birthday parties, social events (ie: Grace Simons Lodge, Friendship Auditorium, Orcutt Ranch)
- Sherman Oaks Castle Park Miniature Golf Center – operates three miniature courses; children’s birthday parties; arcade and batting cages
- Parking Lot Operations – Cabrillo Beach, Harbor Sports Complex, and Westwood
- Travel Town Museum – train displays, birthday parties, and picnic rentals
- Park Film Office – oversight of film permitting at over 400 park locations; oversight of Park Activity Monitors who provide onsite protection of Park assets during filming (note: there were over 2,500 film shoots on park property in 2011)
- Special Events and Picnic Rentals – Griffith Park, (including Pote Field and Martinez Arena), Elysian Park, Ernest E. Debs Regional Park, and Barnsdall Park
- Traffic Control – provide support to the Greek Theatre season with directing traffic flow; provide traffic control and customer service during the annual Department of Water and Power Light Festival; assist during Griffith Park Special Events

Golf Operations

- The Golf Division became self sustaining (off budget) on July 1, 2010.
- January 1, 2011 – the Golf Division began self operating the entire electric golf cart fleet with the carts obtained from the previous concession operator.
- July 1, 2011 – the golf courses received their brand new fleet of electric golf carts at all courses.
- A victim of a heart attack at Harbor Golf on August 8, 2011, was resuscitated by a maintenance employee using cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and an automatic external defibrillator (AED).
- March 20, 2011 – the Los Angeles River overflowed in the Sepulveda Basin when the area was hit by a rain storm, causing damage to both Sepulveda golf courses (Balboa and Encino). The Encino course was severely impacted by mud, silt, and other debris. The course was expected to be closed for months to provide staff the opportunity to make necessary repairs and to rebuild part of the course. The golf course remarkably re-opened six weeks later on April 29.
- October 1, 2011 – Golf Division began successfully self operating the Rancho

Park Golf Course driving range. A short one month later, on November 1, the Golf Division added the Woodley Lakes driving range to its self operation. (Self-operation occurred due to the concessionaires vacating these sites.)

- December 1, 2011 – the Griffith Park golf courses (Roosevelt, Los Feliz, Harding and Wilson) were struck by a wind storm causing over 100 trees to fall with much damage to the golf courses. (This type of violent wind storm occurs once every 100 years.) Wilson and Harding were closed for two days to make repairs and clean up debris. Los Feliz and Roosevelt were closed for three days.
- After 18 months being off budget, the Golf Division is fiscally solvent and meeting all of its financial goals. The Golf Division continues to receive praise for the golfing conditions and playability of the Department's golf courses and facilities.

Park Rangers

- The Park Rangers provide first aid/rescues, public information, fire patrol/fire fighting, interpretive programming and public safety. The Park Ranger Division consists of 19 full-time Rangers along with part time staff that provide security at the Observatory. The Rangers are mainly assigned to Griffith Park.
- Summer months – Rangers assist Los Angeles Fire Department personnel in fighting fires at various regional Parks. The Rangers are equipped with a water tender and fire engines.
- December 1, 2011 – high winds incident, Rangers assisted Forestry Division in removing tree debris along roads and trails, along with handling other safety concerns in Griffith Park.
- Ranger Interpretive Unit – programming expanded to include programs for teens from the Recreation Centers. This past summer, teens were able to attend an Outdoor Wilderness Survival training in Angeles National Forest at the Chilao Campground. The Rangers also provided a historical overview tour of the Harbor starting at the White Point Nature Preserve, ending at Cabrillo Beach, where the teens were able to look at the environmental impact of pollution and explore wildlife at the tide pools.
- Winter and Spring – Rangers are offering a Whale Watching Program at Point Vicente Nature Center in Palos Verdes and a backpacking day hike/trip to the Hollywood sign.
- Nature Hikes – hikes are led on the first and third Saturday of the month for the public in Griffith Park. On the second and fourth Saturday of the month, nature hike for the public are lead at White Point Nature Preserve.
- Junior Ranger Program – implemented, youth 7-12 years can earn a patch and become sworn in as an official Junior Ranger. The youth learn about plant and animal life in the park, and how to become good stewards of the environment by reducing consumption, reusing and recycling. They also learn the “Leave No

Trace Principles”, which educates and promotes techniques to reduce a negative impact on the environment. The program culminates in making a positive impact on the earth by assisting in a clean-up or planting a native plant.

- Rangers are now overseeing Augustus Hawkins Nature Center and are providing nature based programs at this location.

Aquatic Division

- RAP is recognized nationally as having the best and safest municipal Aquatics operation. Our safety record speaks volumes to the work of the women and men of this Division.
- In 2011 the RAP Aquatics Division received a \$265,000 Grant from Kaiser Permanente to provide 6,000 swim lessons at 35 urban impact swimming pools, along with supporting the Junior Guard program, extended season, and the "Rethink Your Drink Campaign". The goal of this campaign was to bring awareness to the calories consumed in high sugar content drinks.
- In 2011 the RAP Aquatics Division received an \$85,000 grant from LA 84 to provide sponsorships for aquatic team sports at 49 aquatic facilities and swim lessons at non urban impact aquatic facilities.
- Program registration, attendance, and revenue increased in 2011.
- Aquatic's trained and hired 128 new lifeguards for the 2011 summer season.

Goals For 2012:

- Create and implement a Program Orientated Training for Recreation Directors and Recreation Coordinators
- Standardize Region Office operations
- Reallocation of existing resources (ie: play supplies, equipment)
- Facility energy conservation as direct savings remain within the department
- Propose changes to the Rates and Fees and develop innovative ways to expand funding and resources

This report was prepared by Kevin Regan, Assistant General Manager, Operations Branch.