

News Release



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California State Parks Mourns Loss Of Visionary Park Leader

Ronald P. Schafer 1957 – 2010

California State Parks is mourning the loss of Ronald P. Schafer, superintendent of the Angeles District. Schafer died Wednesday evening at USC Medical Center in Los Angeles due to complications from a stroke suffered on Sunday, September 10.

Schafer was well known throughout the Los Angeles parks and recreation community, from the local to the national level, for having established himself as a professional park manager and lifeguard of the highest caliber during his 35 years with California State Parks.

“There was tremendous passion in all Ron did in life,” said Ruth Coleman, director of California State Parks. “He leaves behind a legacy of park protection and a deep sense of respect that will live on for many people for years to come.”

Schafer began as a seasonal lifeguard at Huntington and Bolsa Chica State beaches at the age of 18. He graduated from the State Park Peace Officer Academy in 1984. Following graduation, he returned to Huntington and Bolsa Chica State beaches in a permanent position as a State Park Peace Officer Lifeguard. Ron quickly promoted, rising through the ranks of Lifeguard Supervisor I, II and III overseeing the lifeguard program and serving as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer of the Orange Coast District. He promoted to the Superintendent series overseeing both the Chino Hills and Lake Perris Sector operations in Riverside County. In the mid-1990s he moved to the Bay Area District as the District Superintendent. In 2002, he moved to the position of superintendent of the Angeles District.

Ron was born in Akron, Ohio in 1957. He attended the University of Texas on a swimming scholarship for one year, eventually graduating from San Jose State University. Swimming

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was always important to Ron – he swam as a “Master’s level” swimmer for many years – supporting and competing in many United States Lifesaving Association Lifeguard Nationals.

Ron was instrumental in developing the high quality lifeguarding program that characterizes the department’s present service. It was during Ron’s tenure as a lifeguard leader that State parks’ lifeguard program expanded to more fully serve the public need and provide for the integration of the State Parks law enforcement activities with allied agencies.

“Throughout his career, Ron sought to mentor fellow employees, to share his knowledge and to encourage all to pursue excellence in their careers,” said Tony Perez, deputy director for Park Operations. “Ron was a team-builder, a great friend and an inspiration to many.”

A constant theme throughout Ron’s career was building partnerships that allowed the establishment of new State Parks in urban areas, building a coalition that through Ron’s vision created Eastshore State Park in Emeryville, the transition of Candlestick Point State Recreation Area, the establishment of Rio de Los Angeles State Park and Los Angeles State Historic Park. Ron also oversaw the development of the new public use area of Baldwin Hills, within Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area.

He strengthened the critical partnership with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the National Park Service in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, creating a recreational treasure in that region. Ron worked tirelessly to see the shared vision of the establishment of a new national and state inter-agency visitor center in the Santa Monica Mountains, a project that will continue in his absence.

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