

## Limiting Risk

*By Suzy Hopkins*

Most days being a California State Park mounted ranger is a thankless and frustrating job: sly underage teenagers drinking on the property, innocent looking people fishing without a license, drunken brawls on the main beaches (a ranger on a horse can break up a brawl quicker than four rangers on the ground), mean dogs off leashes, fire-hazardous charcoal grills by the water's edge, and obnoxiously loud jet skis being used in the wrong area with many of the same people violating the rules every week.

The true value of being a ranger on horseback is the ability to surprise people who think they will never be found by a ranger. A horse can go where a jeep cannot. I found numerous people residing in the park including AWOL marines, took into custody a man who had his little girl tied to a tree, caught teenage runaways and corralled loose pit bulls. One time a pit bull knocked over my horse by attacking the belly and hanging on. Then it attacked me at the direction of the pit bull's owner.

The State of California took our pistols away because a gun can be grabbed by an attacker and turned on the park ranger who is protecting her horse. Now they have only two-way radios to call for back-up. The State is playing it safe rather than taking a risk with the lives of their staff.