

Glacial meltdown for Alaskan ranger

Danny Rosenkrans swapped sub zero temperatures for a tropical climate on an exchange of national park rangers between Exmouth and Alaska.

It was a year of differences and similarities for the geologist turned ranger, who returned to the United States earlier this month.

Danny said in spite of the differences in climate—25 per cent of the Alaskan park is snow and ice all year round—there were many similarities in the job.

Danny said he had dealt with indigenous people, managed vast wilderness areas, closed and rehabilitated 4WD tracks, closed and rehabilitated old mining tracks, monitored aircraft landing spots, monitored wildlife and handled mining issues.

One of his major management issues was salmon fishing. If supplies dwindled, commercial fishers were the first to be denied fishing rights, followed by recreational anglers and indigenous people. The last fishing rights remained with the grizzly bears.

“Everyone else might miss out, but not the wildlife,” Danny said.

Other issues included the 1967 discovery of oil in the region, copper and gold mining rights, reclamation of old mining sites and recognising indigenous peoples’ rights to ceremonial or subsistence hunting and fishing on traditional lands.

The park has 85 landing strips that allow many of the parks 35,000 yearly visitors to fly to remote areas for a wilderness experience. Where once there were about 1000 kilometres of mining and 4WD trails, the tracks are being closed down. People now need permits to travel by vehicle within the park.

One of the differences between Alaska and Australia was land stability. There were plenty



From left to right: Dave Hampton, Dirk Rosenkrans, Danny Rosenkrans and Elena Aniere at Kensington office. Photo by Yerna Costello

of earthquakes “so it’s a great place for a geologist such as me.”

He said glaciers in the park had retreated over periods of time, with one glacier retreating 11 kilometres in 20 years.

Another difference was politics, he said. In Alaska he was a Federal employee; in WA rangers are employed by the Department at State level.

“I feel that in America the parks are seen

much more in a national sense than the parks here,” he said.

Mining would not be allowed in American national parks because they were enormously important as conservation icons, he said.

“Conservation in the US has a much stronger footing. All our issues are national issues,” he said.

Another major component was the management of national and cultural heritage, he said.





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For further information contact Robert Powell.

