



Nudists put up a big stink after park officials at San Onofre State Beach bury a dead sea lion under the volleyball court at Trail 6. See story page 3.

PARK OFFICIALS APOLOGIZE FOR BURYING DEAD SEA LION ON SAN ONOFRE NUDE BEACH

The cold war between nudists at San Onofre State Beach and the local Parks Superintendent got a little hotter last month after officials buried a rotting sea lion carcass on the spot where nudists like to play weekend volleyball.

It's the latest twist in a more than two-year dispute between state Parks and Recreation officials and nudists, who recently lost their court case to keep Trail 6 a clothing-optional beach.

Allen Baylis and the Naturist Action Committee went into action just before New Years, when he started receiving complaints about the stench from beachgoers and about the fin protruding up from the sand. Apparently the animal was found dead at the "Dogpatch" northern end of San Onofre beach on December 23 where the surfers like to congregate, but instead of burying it there, the superintendent ordered it be moved five miles south and be buried where the nudists hang out.

Park officials insist the burial of the sea lion -- estimated at 10 to 12 feet long was not an intentional jab at the group. "We just found an animal ... we had to bury it... it's something we do with every animal," said Steve Scott, district maintenance chief for the Orange Coast district. "We apologize. I guess nature just happens."

Baylis questioned parks officials about why they would bury a dead animal at one of the most heavily used portions of San Onofre State Beach. "It's either retaliation or ignorance," he said. "They had a choice. They can bury it where it is or take it to a landfill where it won't bother anybody. Instead they took it to a place where there are people they don't like, and they buried it there."

A few days after Baylis complained about the mammal's fin protruding out of the sand, maintenance crews were seen reburying the carcass even deeper into the beach sand.

That prompted Baylis to issue a statewide Action Alert to the nudist community to send complaint letters to the local Superintendent Ken Kramer . In response, Richard Haydon,

South Sector Superintendent (and the man behind closing the nude beach) sent out a form letter. It said, in part:

"Due to significant beach erosion and above average beach crowds, it was determined by Parks' staff that a burial of the carcass in place was not feasible. It was further decided that the carcass would be transported by use of heavy equipment to the Trail 6 area of San Onofre State Beach, where such equipment could safely reach the beach, maneuver, and dig a hole deep enough for proper disposal. Unfortunately, the hole that was dug was not deep enough to prevent resurfacing of the carcass.

"It was never the intent of California State Parks to...disrupt the beach experience for our visiting public. For this, we deeply apologize."

This reply did not satisfy Baylis, who kept the pressure up with more letters to Superintendent Kramer. Finally, on January 16, a new form letter went out to all who had sent letters of complaint:

"It was relayed to me," wrote Kramer, "that the seal could not be safely buried at Dogpatch due to the lack of sand, large beach crowds, and little area to maneuver the heavy equipment. At the San Onofre bluffs area, there exist only three routes to the beach that the heavy equipment could utilize; Trails 1, 4, and 6. State Parks staff dismissed Trails 1 & 4 in their decision making process due to significant beach erosion. **In hindsight, it would have been preferable that the carcass was buried at a different location.** Presently, the seal is buried at a depth of approximately 10 feet, which should be sufficient to not pose a risk to public health. The decision was made to bury the seal carcass in place because there now exists a greater risk of rupturing the carcass during extrication, which could pose a threat to public health. Should the seal resurface again, we will evaluate the situation and act appropriately, which could include moving it to a different location if possible."

Kramer told the *Orange County Register* newspaper that they "don't really know" how long it will take for the mammal to completely deteriorate. "I would just stay away from the area," he added.

Which, of course, may have been the plan all along.



Park officials at San Onofre State Beach use a backhoe to re-bury the dead Sea Lion.