



Farewell Old Friend

Friends, Romans, Countrymen, Greenspace Gurus, and all the rest of the fine people that make up the Virtual Parks and Recreation Service :)

After much deliberation, experimentation, and reorganization, the Virtual Parks and Recreation Service is closing its doors.

What exactly does this mean?

- Registration for the VPRS Location Listing has already been shut down, and the majority of the website will be taken down within the next 24 hours.

- The VPRS kiosks will no longer function in any capacity. The Greenspace Starter Kit and VPRS Camping Gear will continue to be available through Red Prometheus as free items, and the Camping Gear will continue to be updated by Higbee Protagonist via Red Prometheus.

- The "final" location listing will ONLY exist on the remaining website page as a list of SLURLs alongside this release.

- Most groups and extraneous websites will also

be shut down. Flickr will remain active because it has a wonderful usage base that serves a different purpose entirely.

- I will be personally taking over and holding the land in Salerio in order to keep my promise to its former owner.

- No support will be offered in any way for kiosks, registrations, or listings, which includes the final location listing. Only a disclaimer will remain with the listing that makes certain that readers know these locations may not exist when they attempt to visit them.

- Anyone who attempted to register with the VPRS on or after February 18th may not be on the final location listing. We apologize for the inconvenience, but all pertinent support personnel have been unavailable since that date.

Now that you know all of the particulars of how this will affect users, I imagine that you are asking yourself why.

The VPRS, originally called the SLPRS, was founded shortly after SecondLife went live in 2004. My original goals for creating the organization were two-fold. Most important was to let everyone know about the wonderful greenspaces that were available to enjoy throughout SecondLife, and almost as important was to encourage the creation of these types of spaces.

In the early days of SecondLife, there were very few of us: few users and few places to go. When I first joined there were about 10 regions, and as you can see by looking at the map now, things have changed dramatically over the last 4 and a half years.

In 2005 there was a huge uproar in the SL community as the first private island was created and the commercial future of SecondLife was predicted. In an online venture of any sort, commercialization is a very important part of the process. In order for SL to become the "Metaverse" that it wished to be, commercialization was in fact one of the more important pieces of the puzzle.

However, from Alpha stage to 2005, SL was basically an artist's community. Pornography and gambling were also very big in the beginning, but for all intents and purposes SL was a small town inhabited mainly by people who just enjoyed creating entertainment for the sake of it.

This was a big time for the VPRS because I was personally very active in the community at large and was intent on helping people believe that the artistic side of SL would not go away once commercialization truly set in. I would even say that this was the VPRS's "heyday" if you will.

As time went on and first life became a larger priority for

me, the VPRS narrowed down to the location listing that it is so well known for. It went through many stages as the years went by always struggling to survive but remaining nonetheless and expanding where and when it could.

Over the last year a large push was made with the organization in attempt to either have it finally succeed or to have proof that it should shut down. During this year, the organization revitalized rather well but still lacked the community that it needed to have at its core. Since I was ultimately making all of the final decisions, this became problematic very quickly, so further changes were made by acquiring staff and automating as many systems as possible.

Over the last 4 months, the organization has been hanging by the thread of its location listing, which has been somewhat successful until the release of the new Search created for SecondLife.

The new search utilizes similar tools as Google in order to determine the validity of a search response and offers all of the same options as the VPRS location listing. Additionally, the new search has no rules. This may seem like a small thing, but in a world where one of the largest benefits is not having rules, this made the location listing even more problematic.

One could say then that the goal of the VPRS location listing is to monitor quality or purpose of virtual greenspaces, but the policing of such a thing would be problematic at best. Additionally, who is to say what is good quality and purpose? Now you can see the core issue that remained.

The best thing for a society like SecondLife, and Real Life for that matter is having options. There are many groups and organizations that do an excellent job of supporting Greenspaces in both 1st and 2nd life. There are a number of groups and magazines that continually review or visit locations to help them to receive the marketing and traffic they need. There are also several groups that are truly making efforts to push the fold of what Virtual Nature can achieve.

The VPRS has at long last become obsolete, so we have decided that it is time to shut down. I say "we" because I have spoken to a number of people throughout this process in order to find a successor for the organization, and we have explored all of the alternative options available to the organization.

Of course there is a part of me that is sad. It is one of very few groups that have existed since SL went live in '04. However there is also a part of me that is happy to see that the community at large, the SL program itself, and the other organizations coming into or being created within SL have

done such a fine job of growing and supporting these same individuals.

I want to personally thank everyone who has helped the VPRS over the years: Anaraxis Romulus, Furious Tigereye, HeadBurro Antfarm, Osprey Therian, Marisa Naheed, Bettina Tizzy, and most importantly Princess Ivory and Bjorlyn Loon, without whom the last year of the organization would not have even been possible. I wish I could go through and name everyone that has supported this group and been a part of the organization in some factor over the years, but there are just too many.

Love your fellow SLer, support your local greenspace, create content, and enjoy your second life.

To the VPRS...I bid you a fond farewell and thanks for everything.

- Higbee Protagonist

