

McClure Meadow Ranger
(Dave Gordon)

2000 End-Season Report

VISITOR CONTACTS AND BACKCOUNTRY PATROLS

	<u>Visitor Contacts</u>	<u>Miles Patrolled</u>
June (5 days)	- 60	32
July (gone 6 days)	- 278 (374 including Pate Clum's Contacts)	159
August	- 506	200
September	- 201	184
October (4 days)	- 14	28
Totals	1,059 (1,155 including Pate Clum's Contacts)	603 (approximately 1/3 cross-country)

This was another summer with over 200 PCTers starting at the Mexican border, due to a relatively dry winter and perhaps the new millennium. I encountered about 100 PCTers along the JMT, the first couple of weeks of the season. There also seemed to be an above average number of hikers doing the entire JMT, usually north to south, comprising approximately 60% of the contacts made. The remaining contacts consisted of North Lake to/from South Lake trekkers (20-30%); hikers in and out of Florence Lake (10-20%); and loops involving Lamarck Col (5-10%).

Organized groups consisted of thirteen Boy Scout troops, two Outward Bound groups (Davis and Martha Lakes), three Sierra Club groups, and one church group.

STOCK USE / GRAZING

181 stock (all types) were seen in the backcountry with 82 stock users. Stock consisted of 151 horses/mules, 19 llamas, and 11 burros. Of the 27 groups contacted, 6 were administrative (Luke Painter, 5-5-8), 7 were private, and 14 were commercial operators — Bishop Pack Outfitters (2); High Sierra Pack Station (7); Rock Creek Pack Station (1); D&F Pack Station (1); LeeLin Llama Treks (1); Moir Trail Ranch (1); and Lost Valley Pack Station (1 - Richard Ross).

Most grazing occurred at Evolution Meadow (moderately grazed) which opened per "normal year" schedule on July 1st, but showed no signs of grazing until late July. McClure and Colby Meadows openings were delayed until July 28th and experienced relatively light grazing (several groups used each meadow). A couple of groups grazed at the junction of the Hell-for-Sure Pass trail in Goddard Canyon. No signs of stock use were seen at Martha Lake or Lake 11,106, which had day rides last summer.

Darwin Meadow was delayed one month to August 15th, due to its boggy nature. It was opened only to stock groups traveling over Moir Pass the next morning, and packers were asked to try to keep stock away from the muddy portion. To document previous impact damage and the progressive drying of the meadow, photographs were taken

on July 17th, August 1st and August 15th from six vantage points (prior to any stock use this year). On August 25th, eleven vantage points were photographed to show impact damage from four stock groups using the meadow for a total of 42 stock-nights. Two additional sets of photos were taken on September 22nd, after at least one additional stock^{group} had grazed, from twelve vantage points (one set sent to Bob Meadows; one set given to Debbie Brenchley). See map & key at end of report.

Based on the significant impact damage sustained, in spite of a one month delay in opening and only about 50 stock-nights use, it is my recommendation that Darwin Meadow be closed to grazing and the hitchrail removed. Parties needing to travel over Muir Pass the next day can either camp at Colby Meadow (2 miles further) or one of the pocket meadows between.

Manure piles in meadows were routinely scattered throughout the summer to expedite decomposition. This practice also assists in gauging relative stock use and the specific grazing locations in a meadow.

LAW ENFORCEMENT INCIDENTS

No citations* were written this summer (my commission was reinstated for the last three pay periods). Verbal warnings were given to backpackers as follows:

* on 10/2, a citation was given for a dog in the backcountry

(4) tents on grass; (2) tents/camps too close to water; (3) trash in firepit or around camp; (5) improper or insufficient food storage (often not hung high enough or too close to trunk of tree); (1) gathering small amount of wood to start a fire above 10,000 ft. The verbal warnings were mostly well received, and always done with an explanation for the regulation.

Three written warnings were given to D&F Pack Station (no one at camp) for no food storage (stack nearby), tents on meadowgrass, and high lines using rope around trees (instead of cinch strap).

MEDICAL INCIDENTS

One medivac was conducted on August 10th near Wanda Lake for a female Sierra Club group member with acute intestinal illness (cause unknown). Trailcrew reported to Dispatch, and Debbie Brenchley responded with helitack.

One search occurred in the Darwin Canyon area on September 6th for a hiker who separated from the other member of his party and could not find Lamarck Col. He was airlifted, unharmed by a helicopter from a non-NPS agency.

Several visitors were examined for sore knees or ankles, but were able to walk out on their own. All were

advised to rest a day with cold therapy and elevation — no swelling, discoloration, or grating upon flexure/rotation were noted before hiking out (to Florence Lake).

SERVICE INCIDENTS

Numerous visitor assistance throughout the summer consisted of cross-country route advice; camping locations; good fishing spots; trail (snow) conditions; weather forecasts; repairing a water pump; repairing a pack-frame; supplying food (5 times); supplying insect repellent and sunblock (one each). Three calls were made to dispatch to call a visitor's relative or friend to either report a delay in date of exit and/or a change in pick-up location.

RANGER STATION

The stove pipe cap was damaged beyond repair in last winter's snow and will need replacement (6" stove pipe cap). Several holes/gaps in logs or at the ground have been chinked with rocks or wood plugs to help rodent-proof the cabin (only about 20 mice have been caught this summer, versus 60-70 caught last summer). The cabin, in my opinion, is in fair condition with a good roof, and should not need major refurbishment for several years.

WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS

This was a disappointing year for wildlife observations, having seen no pine martens* or weasels, and not even a bear for the first season ever. A friend observed a marmot above the west end of McClure in late September.

* one may have been seen by U.I.P., Pete Clum in late July at Ranger Station

TRASH REMOVAL

Approximately 150 pounds of trash was collected in the backcountry, hiked to the ranger station, and packed out by Park or commercial packers. Trash consisted of cans, bottles, old fence wire, two aluminum chairs, campfire foil, and parts from some sort of aircraft.

FIRERINGS

129 firerings were cleaned and/or reduced. 64 firerings were eliminated for either being above 10,000 ft. or too close to water/trails, or extraneous (unnecessary). Destroyed firerings had all blackened rocks thrown into water or brush, and all ashes and wood hidden to reduce enticement for other fires.

MEADOW MONITORING

Two meadows were monitored for residual biomass in late September: Colby and Evolution Meadows. Colby had only a "reference" plot, as the meadow was uniformly, lightly grazed, except for a closely cropped area (< 1000 sq.ft.) adjacent to the west-end campsite due to either llamas and/or hobbled horses. Evolution Meadow was monitored using the same moderately grazed "core" plot and lightly grazed "reference" plot as last year. Photos were taken of impact damage at Darwin, Colby and McClure Meadows, and of long term erosion damage at Evolution Meadow.

TRAILS

Trail crew cleared a half dozen trees crossing the JMT at Aspen Meadow in early July, and about the same in Goddard Canyon below the Hell-for-Sure Pass junction. They also did considerable raised, "catwalk" rock work along the JMT, especially near Wanda Lake (they base-camped near the inlet of Sapphire Lake for about a month).

Lamarck Col is the left of three notches above a snowfield (above a tarn) on the northeast side. Most hikers cross the snowfield to either of the right two notches, and miss the true Col with the NPS entrance sign and remnants of an old trail. Hikers using these notches produce a myriad of extraneous paths down the southwest slopes of the Col. A large rock cairn was erected at the top of the true pass, and two others near the top of the snowfield (the top one can be clearly seen from the bench below). Hopefully this will guide hikers to the correct notch, especially in early season, when tracks on the snowfield should also lead hikers to the Col. If there is not a significant improvement next summer, photocopies of the Col from the bench on the northeast side with an arrow indicating the proper notch could be given to hikers at the Inyo National Forest, White Mountain Ranger District Visitor Center, where most permits for Lamarck Col are issued.

Throughout the summer on routine patrols, trails were cleared of rocks ("stumpers"), pine cones, branches, and horse/mule manure, which elicited many favorable comments from visitors.

DRIIFT FENCES

Little work was required on the three drift fences other than tightening wire and replacing fence nails. The fences are in relatively good condition and should not need more than routine maintenance in the near future.

BRIDGES

A log rail on the Goddard Canyon Bridge was replaced by trail crew (broke from snowload last winter). The three bridges are in good condition.

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

The first eleven days of the season (first 18 days last year), I was not able to contact NPS Dispatch or 736B. Sierra National Forest Dispatch ("Givens" repeater) was used to relay status to the Park. One of the repeaters in the chain ("Evolution" → "White Bark" → "Park Ridge") may have a problem with snow/ice that prevents it from operating until it melts sufficiently. Work was done on the "Evolution" Repeater during the last week of July, which greatly improved the transmitting quality of the signal (reception at Dispatch and 736B). The MT-1000 radio with telescopic antenna works well from most locations in the McClure patrol area.

BEAR INCIDENTS

Only one bear incident report was taken this summer. On August 16th, four women hiking the JMT were camped at the McClure Meadow campsite just east of the Ranger Station, and had their food stored in six food cannisters. A small tube of toothpaste was left in a pack top-flap pocket, and a large adult bear hauled it off up the slope to the north. After an hour long search for the pack top, it was found with a tear in it and bite marks on the tube of toothpaste and a lotion bottle.

Several other second and third hand reports of bears getting food were also received, mostly along the South Fork of the San Joaquin River — many reports from Blayne Meadows in Sierra National Forest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Require stock users (or strongly encourage) to provide either bear proof panniers or locking steel drums for their pack trips (20 gal steel drums cost about \$15⁰⁰ each and are highly packable — Mike Morgan of Bishop Pack Outfitters knows a source)
- 2) Close Darwin Meadow to grazing and remove hitchrail (see "Stock-use/Grazing") (see also map and photo key at end of report)

- 3) Send a "friendly" memo to pack outfitters, perhaps with the tentative opening dates in the spring, reminding them of a few regulations that have been recently neglected:
 - (a) need to provide sufficient bear-proof containers for clients
 - (b) need to use high lines properly: cinch straps around trees, and 100 feet from water, camps, trails
 - (c) need to remove manure 100 feet from campsites (about 40 paces)
- 4) Close Martha Lake to all stock travel — the route goes through a boggy meadow about a mile below the lake that does not dry out enough to prevent severe impact damage from any stock travel
- 5) Build no new hitchrails (keep the backcountry natural) — encourage stock users to use traditional stock camps and to properly use high lines (Rangers must be vigilant!)
- 6) Change opening dates for McClure and Colby Meadows to 8/1 for a "normal year", 8/15 for a "wet" year, and 7/15 for a "dry" year — this season was the dry end of a "normal" year and these meadows were too wet and immature for a scheduled 7/15 opening. Photos taken on 8/26 at these meadows show moderate hoof impact damage after a 7/28 opening.

- 7) Require/Encourage non-NPS permit writers to explain, and have permittee initial, several key minimum impact regulations/issues including:
- (a) need to guard or protect food from bears at all times (how to hang food properly)
 - (b) need to bury human waste at least 6" deep and 100 feet from water, camps, trails; T-P disposal
 - (c) need to obey fire regulations: build no new fire rings; no fires above 10,000 ft (strictly enforced); remove and pack out foil/cans from ashes; douse fire with water (never leave unattended)
 - (d) need to erect tents on bare ground
- 8) Obtain an HT-1000 radio with rechargeable batteries and charger as a back-up and station radio
- 9) Program MT-1000 radio with both Sierra & Inyo National Forest Dispatch frequencies — encounters with east-of-crest emergencies cannot be reported without "Inyo Dispatch" capability
- 10) Provide photocopies of the NE side of Lamarck Col with the correct notch (left above snowfield) indicated with an arrow to White Mountain Ranger Station Visitor Center of Inyo National Forest — this in addition to the new large cairn on top of the Col should reduce extraneous trails on the SW side and may help to prevent future searches/rescues (a slide of this view can be provided)
or print

Summer 2000 Darwin Meadow Impact Damage
Photo Key to Map (see map next page)

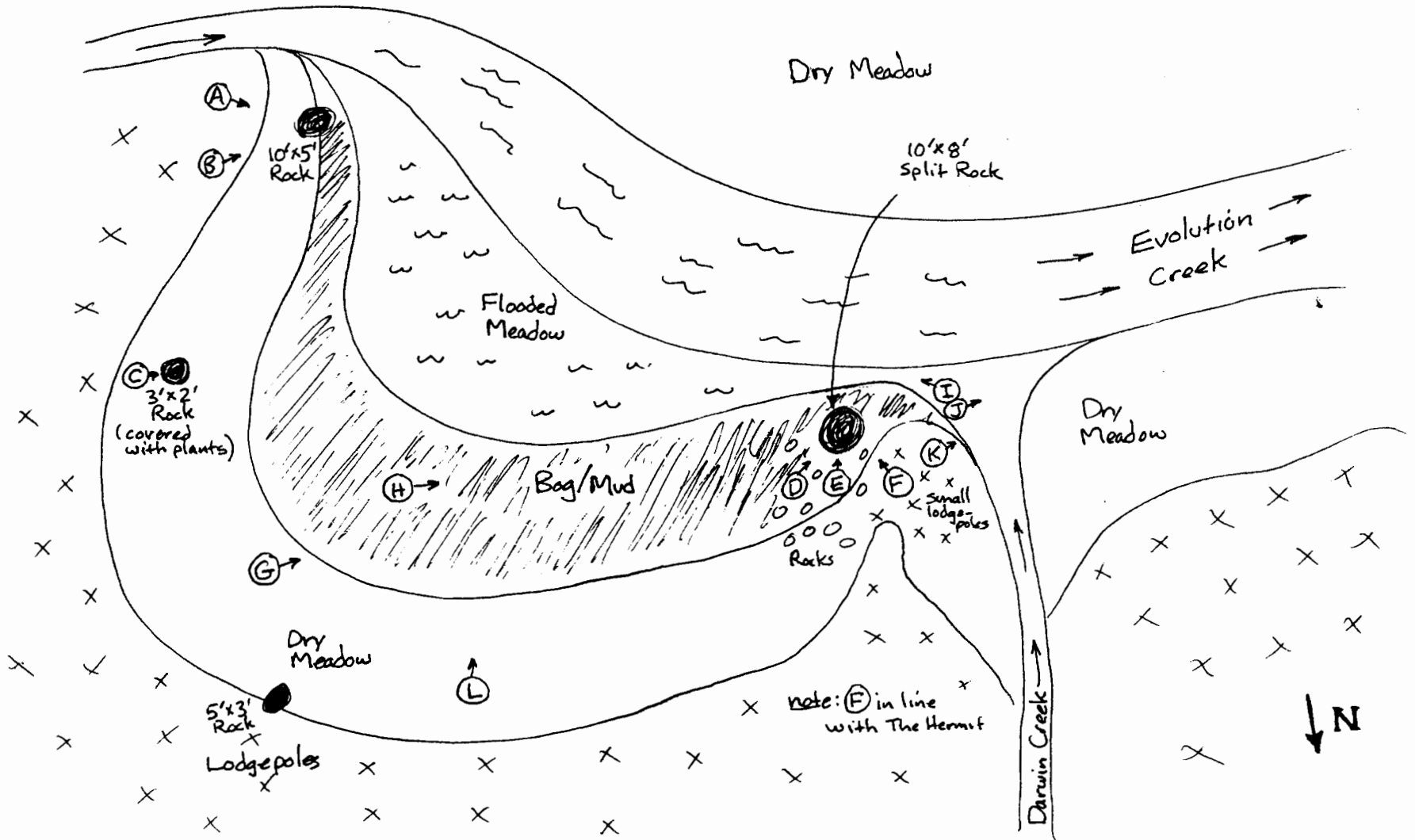
Vantage Point	Roll 1 to Sierra Crest (D. Branchley)			Roll 2 to S.	Roll 3 to Bob Meadow	
	Date: 7/17/00	8/1	8/15	8/25	9/22	9/22
	(Impact Damage from last year)			(Impact Damage from this season)		
A	#1,2	#8	#15,16	#22	#1	#16
B	3	9,10	17	23	2	17
C	4	11	18	24	3	18
D	5	12	19	25	4	19
E	6	13	20	26	5	20
F	7	14	21	27	6	21
G				28	7	22
H				29	8	23
I				30	9	24
J				31	10	25
K				32	11	
L					12	

opened for grazing - 8/16/00

Roll 1
Note: On 8/26, photos 33 & 34 show impact damage at Colby Mdr.
and photos 35, 36 & 37 show impact damage at McClure P.

Darwin Meadow Stock Impact Photo Vantage Points (A-L)
 (see Photo Key page 12)

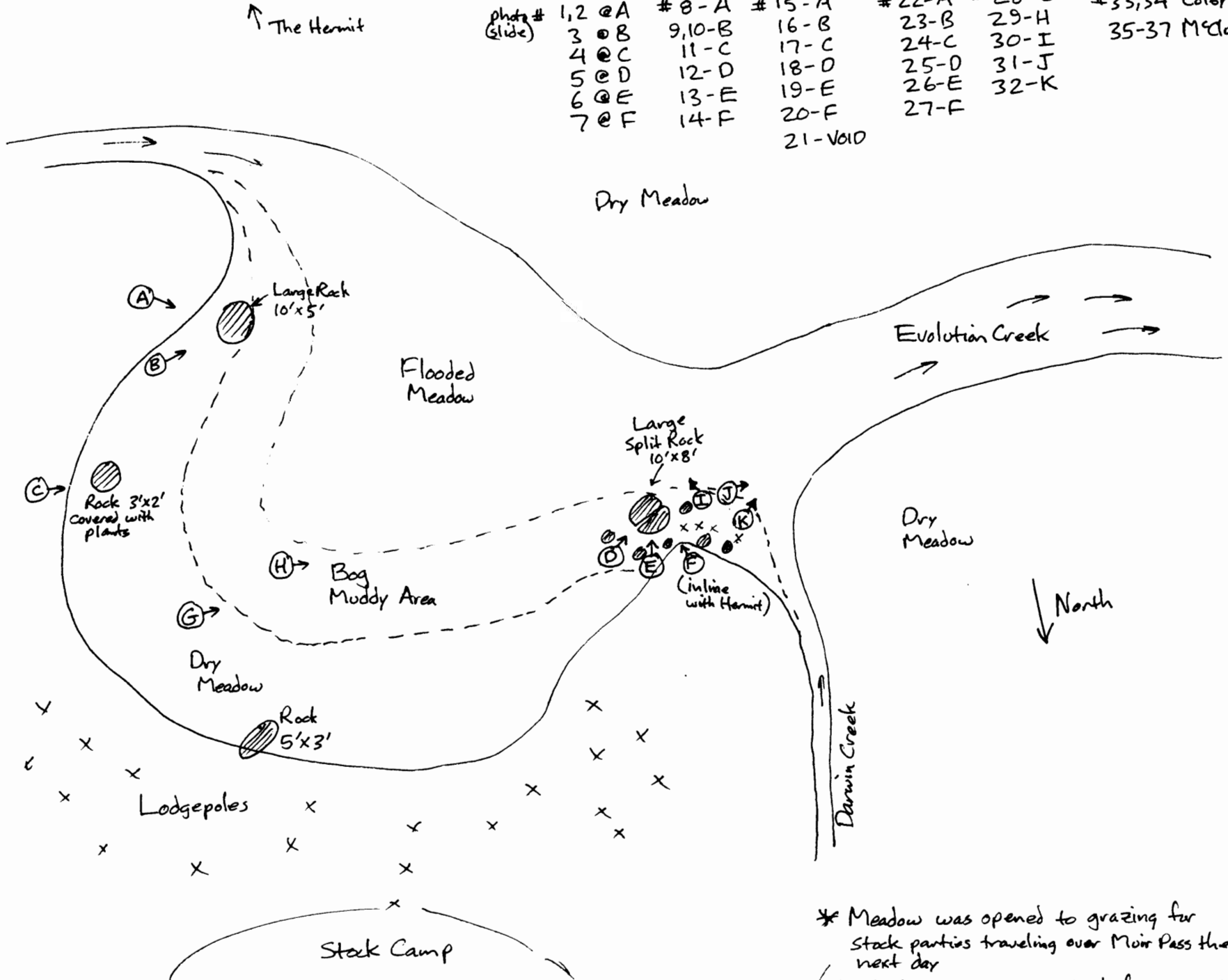
↑ The Hermit



Darwin Meadow Stock Damage Photos

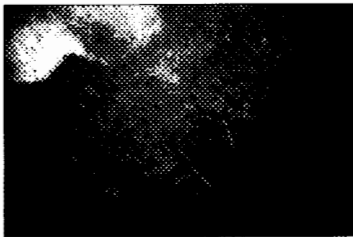
(A)-(K): photo location/direction

photo # (slide)	7/17	8/1	8/15*	8/25 (42 stock-night use)	8/26
1, 2	@ A	# 8-A	# 15-A	# 22-A	# 28-G
3	@ B	9, 10-B	16-B	23-B	29-H
4	@ C	11-C	17-C	24-C	30-I
5	@ D	12-D	18-D	25-D	31-J
6	@ E	13-E	19-E	26-E	32-K
7	@ F	14-F	20-F	27-F	
			21-Void		# 33, 34 Colby Meadow # 35-37 McClure Meadow

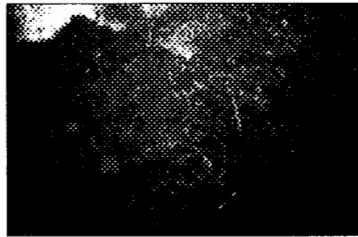


* Meadow was opened to grazing for stock parties traveling over Moir Pass the next day

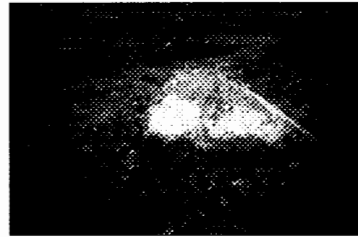
4 stock parties with a total of 42 stock nights used meadow for grazing between



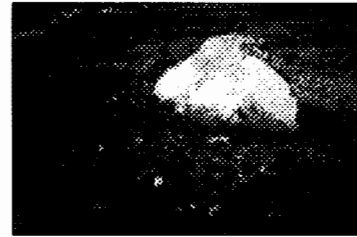
1: A 9/22



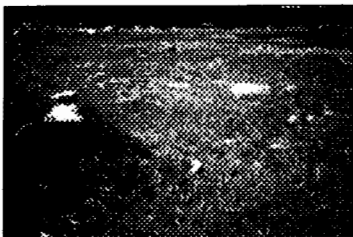
2: A2 9/22



3: B 9/22



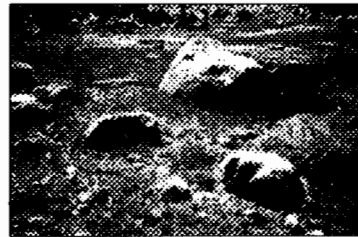
4: B2 9/22/00



5: C 9/22/00



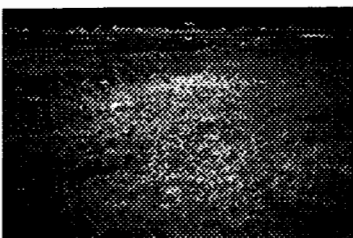
6: D 9/22/00



7: E 9/22/00



8: F 9/22/00



9: G 9/22/00



10: H 9/22/00



11: I 9/22/00



12: J 9/22/00



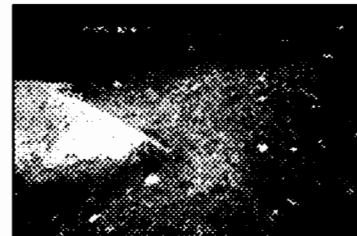
13: K 9/22/00



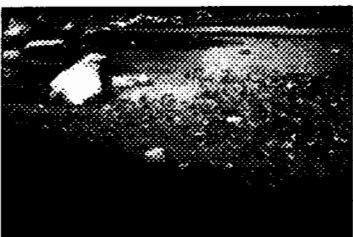
14: L 9/22/00



15: A 7/17/00



16: A2 7/17/00



17: B 7/17/00



18: C 7/17/00



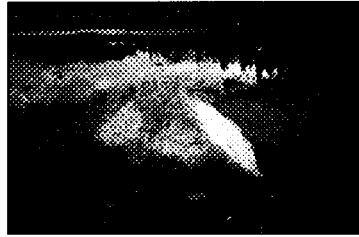
19: D 7/17/00



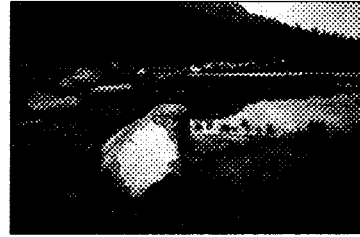
20: E 7/17/00



21: F 7/17/00



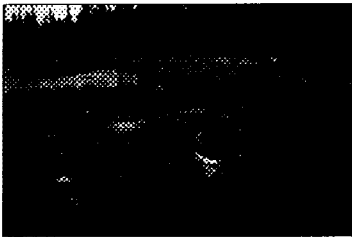
22: A 8/1/00



23: B 8/1/00



24: B2 8/1/00



25: C 8/1/00



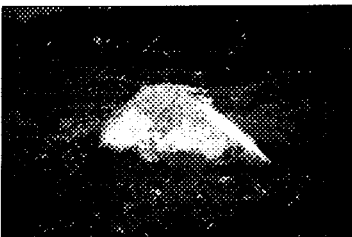
26: D 8/1/00



27: E 8/1/00



28: F 8/1/00



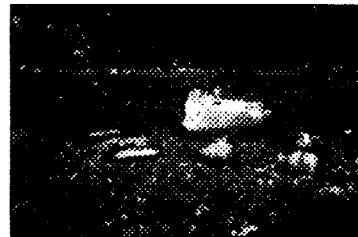
29: A 8/15/00



30: B 8/15/00



31: C 8/15/00



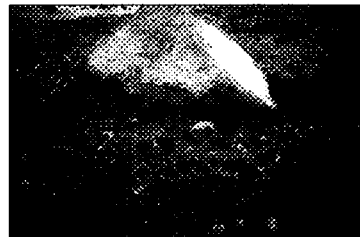
32: D 8/15/00



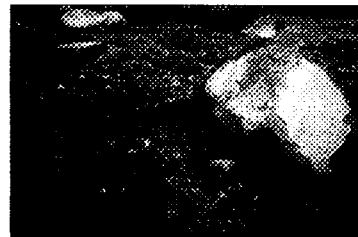
33: E 8/15/00



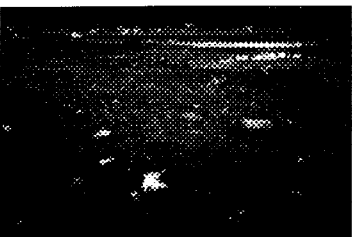
34: F 8/15/00



35: A 8/25/00



36: B 8/25/00



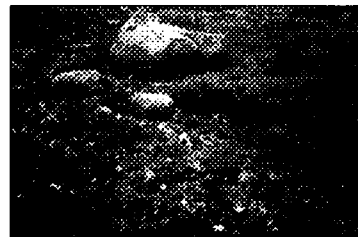
37: C 8/25/00



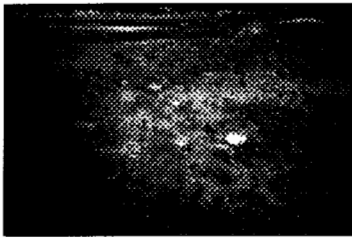
38: D 8/25/00



39: E 8/25/00



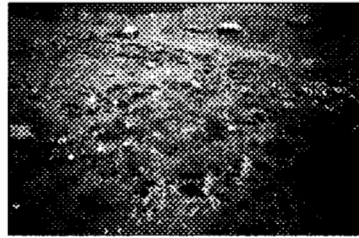
40: F 8/25/00



41: G 8/25/00



42: H 8/25/00□□



43: I 8/25/00



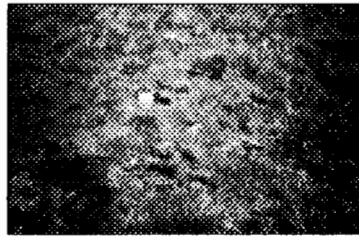
44: J 8/25/00



45: K 8/25/00



46: Colby Mdw 1 8/26/00



47: Colby 2 8/26/00

2000 STOCK USE OBSERVATIONS FOR McClure Meadow RANGER STATION/TRAILHEAD

DATE	WHERE OBSERVED	CAMP/TRAIL	DESTINATION (AREA GRAZED THAT NIGHT)	# OF STOCK	# OF PEOPLE	C P A*	NAME AND ADDRESS (***SEE BELOW***)
7/18	above 2nd Bridge on S. Fork San Joaquin River	Cony Camp	Cony Camp	8	1	A	Luke 5-5-8
7/19	Piute Creek Bridge	Hell-Far-Sure Junct	Hell-Far-Sure Junction Area	4	1	C	Antony HSPS (Cunningham)
7/19	Switchbacks above (towards) Goddard Bridge (Evolution)	Cony Camp	Cony Camp	8	1	A	Luke 5-5-8
8/1	between McClure & Colby Meadows	?	Colby Mdw	6 (burros) ?		P	? (did not see stock users)
8/2	McClure Mdw	Goddard Cony Camp	Cony Camp	6	1	A	Luke 5-5-8
8/5	Evolution Mdw	McClure	McClure Mdw	2 (llamas) 2		P	Connie Christenson P.O. Box 8828; Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
8/7	Goddard Bridge	McClure	McClure Mdw	4 (llamas) 5		P	Melanie Garside HCR 79, Box 188; Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
8/11	Colby Mdw	Colby Mdw	Colby Mdw	2	1	C	Ken High Sierra P.S. (Cunningham)
8/12	McClure Mdw	South McClure	McClure Mdw	8	1	C	Allan H.S.P.S.
8/13	McClure Mdw	Muir Ranch	Day Ride (Spot Trip)	3	2	C	Richard Ross Lost Valley Park Station
8/14	McClure Mdw	Ev. Mdw	Evolution Mdw	6	1	C	Dan Bishop Pack Outfitters
8/14	Evolution Mdw	Ev. Mdw	Evolution Mdw	2 (burros) 4		P	Craig Grace (Rental from Ross) 125 Windstew; Folsom, CA 95630
8/15	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	14	2	C	Mike & Allan H.S.P.S.
8/15	Darwin Mdw	Darwin Mdw	Darwin Mdw (1st day of opening)	9	2	C *	Travis HSPS
8/16	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	6	1	C *	Dan Bishop Pack Outfitters
8/16	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	6	1	A	Luke 5-5-8
8/21	Cony Mdw	Darwin Mdw	Darwin Mdw	7	1	A *	Luke 5-5-8

* C/P/A = Indicate if Commercial, Private, or Administrative

*** Commercial: Name of pack station, lead packer, and customer; no address necessary

Private: Name and address from permit

Administrative: Name of crew and packer

* one night grazing Darwin Mdw before packing over Muir Pass

2000 STOCK USE OBSERVATIONS FOR McClure Meadow RANGER STATION/TRAILHEAD

DATE	WHERE OBSERVED	CAMP/TRAIL	DESTINATION (AREA GRAZED THAT NIGHT)	# OF STOCK	# OF PEOPLE	C P A*	NAME AND ADDRESS (**SEE BELOW**)
8/21	(day ride to Ev. Lake) Evolution Mdw	Evolution Mdw	Evolution Mdw	20	13	C	D&F Pack Station (Huntington Lake) Mollie & Jackie Myers
8/21	Evolution Mdw	Colby Mdw	Colby Mdw	3 (burros)	3	P	Steve Steward (Ross Rentals) 9430 Twin Lakes, Orangevale, CA 95662
8/23	Piute Creek	Darwin Mdw	Evolution Mdw	20	11	C	* Jerry Rock Creek P.S.
8/30	Evolution Mdw	Evolution Mdw	Evolution Mdw	9 (llamas)	11	C	Lee Stanley / Lee Lin Llama Trek P.O. Box 2363; Julian, CA 92036
9/2	Evolution Mdw	None	Day ride from Muir Trail Ranch	4	3	C	Vince Muir Trail Ranch
9/3	McClure Mdw	McClure	McClure Mdw	6	2	C	Travis H.S.P.S.
9/5	McClure Mdw	McClure	McClure Mdw	6	2	C	Travis H.S.P.S.
9/13	Colby Mdw	Evolution Lake	Evolution Lake	4 (llamas)	2	P	Mary Biskup 3810 E. International Ave; Clovis, CA 93611
9/27	McClure R.S.	Cony Camp	Cony Mdw	5	2	A	Luke / Cameron NPS
10/3	McClure R.S.	Cony Camp		3	4	P	
							Stock by
			burros	11			<u>A</u> <u>P</u> <u>C</u>
			llamas	19			40 21 117
			horses/mules	151			groups 6 7 14
			total stock	181			
			people	82			

* C/P/A = Indicate if Commercial, Private, or Administrative

*** Commercial: Name of pack station, lead packer, and customer; no address necessary

Private: Name and address from permit

Administrative: Name of crew and packer

* one night grazing Darwin Mdw before packing over Muir Pass