

FINAL REPORT FROM CHARLOTTE LAKE RANGER STATION SUMMER 1985
OCTOBER 10. CLEAR. 14° F. 4½" SNOW.

Bears. They were about all summer, and likely will be for the foreseeable future. This includes Charlotte Lake, Kearsarge Lakes, Bubbs Creek to treeline and beyond, sometimes Center Basin. How many there are is hard to say. This year I saw three or four different ones at least. I never saw one who didn't run from me, almost as soon as we saw each other.

They get human food regularly enough to stay here, for a variety of reasons: Nearly all campers are afraid of bears and won't defend their camps; people don't use the cables and poles for their own reasons including unwillingness to walk 100 yards to the nearest one; food is improperly hung in trees or not hung at all. Should there be a requirement in the Superintendent's Compendium that cables and poles be used where provided? Folks still stick food in trees at Kearsarge Lakes, and lose it when they do.

The handout literature with permits this year did not include counterbalancing instructions. (Check with a ranger...) I saw more food tied to adjacent trees and talked with more people who hadn't heard about counterbalancing. I think we should return to the old handout titled BEARS!, with diagrams about hanging.

Is this suggestion worth considering for bear cables?: Lower them to about 15 feet, put strong and stationary hooks on them, add a food sack lifting pole, and let people hook their food sacks as they do on the Kearsarge poles. Many campers tell me how much easier the poles are to use.

So...know that bears are a constant and wonderful presence in this area. Wonderful.

Lots of stock in and out of the Vidette area this year. The trail down from Sand Flat on Charlotte Ridge is shredded and pulverized and not much fun to walk on, something the riding managers, I suppose, will inadequately appreciate.

Rainbow Pack Outfits put parties at Shorty's Vidette cabin. A Cedar Grove stock party camped there once as did a private stock party. Perhaps six or ten parties in all. They camped and tied stock beside the cabin, hung stuff on it, leaned stuff against it, and I wondered if all this wouldn't hasten the wear. It certainly detracts from the view of it for others. Because of the historical importance of this cabin and the interest it holds for others, I think we should not allow camping there, at least not within 100 - 200 yards.

On September 29 I carried a metal sign to the cabin and planted it: RESTORATION SITE NO CAMPING. To protect the cabin and protect the view of it for those who seek it. Then I cleaned and naturalized the area and destroyed the firesite.

Also, stock belonging to parties who camped there, from time to time got into the meadow across the creek at the upper bear cable.

I think it would be nice if we had a regulation requiring stock users to make every effort to keep stock more than 100 feet from water -- something in the Superintendent's Compendium -- since we are trying to keep camps that far away. I see too much manure right on stream banks, and beside campsites where the cowboy must have been watching and could have excersized some control.

In the next version of the stock plan I hope we prohibit stock from going to Vidette Lakes. The trail is not suitable for stock (it's scarcely there) and there are wet flowery meadowy areas which do not show much evidence of stock having used them. That is good. The principle of excluding certain kinds of use (automobiles, snowmobiles, mountain bikes) from certain areas is well established in the national parks. So with stock. We need stock-free areas which are easily accessible from main routes for those who desire that kind of country. Easily. Without having to climb into the ruggedest parts of the Sierra. Vidette Lakes fits this need.

The problem is the fishing. It's good. Onion Valley pack station now directs people there, and if some summer they decided to emphasize that place for their customers, the character of the place could be dramatically changed. And it is only a short walk from Vidette Meadow and the John Muir Trail.

All the above also applies to Gardiner Basin except that only the most determined cowboy would try to take stock, and a party, over Gardiner Pass. Nevertheless, it should be officially prohibited, just to keep that popular unmaintained route stock-free for the many who seek it as such. Hikers in Gardiner Basin have commented to me that it is nice to walk for a few days where there haven't been any horses and mules. The point should be made to the stock users that the country is altered in their wake and not all visitors appreciate that and we as managers also have to answer their demands. It is right and proper in a national park to have accessible stock-free areas for the hikers (95+% of the backcountry visitors) who want them.

A Terzian packer once this summer told me that Tracy keeps talking about riding over Gardiner Pass.

Vidette Meadow is another place that hikers appreciate for the general absence of stock use. It is a beautiful meadow, and a very popular camp spot. Even though stock do get in

there from time to time the general appearance is of an absence of stock use. I am told some managers at Ash Mountain are of the opinion that some grazing there would be O. K. I don't think it is necessary. If the upper Bubbs Creek fence were moved down near the upper end of the Vidette Meadow area, stock users too could camp there and still keep their stock out of the meadows, perhaps even more successfully than at present.

Junction Meadow (Kings) received more than 100 stock nights this summer, apparently. A 343 was written on what was seen and photos were taken. I don't know who was responsible for this but as Sierra District Range Management Specialist 118 put it: "It's no longer a meadow. It's a pasture." Pastureized. Is this a concept management can recognize and deal with?

My impression is that the packers from Cedar Grove could have done better at handling their stock in this area. A woman packing for Tracy Terzian (I was told this by a Rainbow packer who said he saw her and her party) camped in Center Basin below Golden Bear Lake prior to August 22 and left trenches around small trees where the stock had been tied for evidently quite awhile, and failed to scatter the many piles of manure.

On the night of September 4 a Terzian packer camped at Vidette Meadow and turned his stock loose in the meadow for the night. I was told this by a SEKI meadow researcher who also camped there that night. It snowed several inches that night but the snowfall didn't start until a few hours before dawn and I was told the stock party stopped at Vidette midday, so this doesn't seem like an emergency stop.

Trash: There is an ancient can dump on the east side of the lowest lake on the South Fork of Gardiner Creek (Broken Hand Lake), half way around the lake and east of the trail. Two-three sacks. No immediately handy helispot. In another fifty years or so it will all be gone, recycled.

Firesites: On August 11, I destroyed twelve firesites at Woods Lake and told two groups camped there they could not have a fire as they were planning. This, one year after Alden spent ten days there destroying everything he could find. A constant problem demanding constant attention. I consider illegal fires one of the biggest backcountry problems.

For Bubbs Creek area I would like two more signs: FIRES PROHIBITED ABOVE 10,000 FEET IN KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK. One for the John Muir Trail at the first camps/trees north of Forester Pass. One for the JMT north of Vidette Meadow at 10,000 feet, 75 yards before reaching the stream crossing (downhill side).

During the last ten days of September I concentrated on firesites along Bubbs Creek from $\frac{1}{2}$ mile below Vidette Meadow to Forester Pass. Sixty-one firesites were worked on. I eliminated everything which was inappropriately situated and attempted to naturalize the sites. Throughout the Vidette Meadow area and up to 10,000 feet I cleaned and rebuilt all proper sites, getting the giant Westinghouse stoves down to ground level with one tier of rocks. Above 10,000 feet I attempted to eliminate and naturalize all sites. At least I got all the active and obvious ones. Remaining for 1986 are some old scars down the west side of upper Bubbs Creek and a few old inactive mostly hidden sites around Center Basin junction (south of the junction, between trail and creek). These I can take care of in short order next summer. But for now I think the Vidette Meadow and upper Bubbs Creek campsites look the best they have in several years. Pretty clean above 10,000 feet, and the giant stoves below, gone.

I also wanted to dig two new outhouses this past fall: one at Charlotte Lake and one at Vidette Meadow. However, the snowstorm of October 7 through 9 prevented it. Prior to October 7 I was busy with firesite work, taking down drift fences, and an attempt-to-locate assignment in Gardiner Basin which involved three days but was successful.

So the outhouse project remains, and is probably an important and immediate priority next summer. As is major drift fence repair and rebuilding. These will have to be done early and will be necessary and time consuming. They should not be left to just one person.

Finally on firesites: Sixty Lakes Basin needs some concentrated firesite work. (I hope I'm not intruding on another ranger's report domain.) It evidently has been more than the past few rangers could keep up with, with all else there is to do in that patrol area. Part of the problem is the plethora of hiding places in that geographically turbulent basin. A CCC crew could do that work in the same season they did trail rerouting and rehabing and fences and ect. in this area. There certainly is enough work around here for a crew.

A PROPOSAL FOR CREW EMPLOYMENT IN THE CHARLOTTE-RAE LAKES AREAS FOR SUMMER 1986.

Trail work: A section of trail approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long around the north shore of Bullfrog Lake could be rerouted northward away from meadows and lakeshore. This will involve putting the trail through boulders and along the edge of a steep forested area. However, since this will be a foot trail only it will not have to be much of a trail. The main point of this work will be to get the traffic out of the meadows and off the lakeshore (the trail now is right on the lakeshore) and to rehab-naturalize the old scars. Important:

There is, in the line of the potential reroute, an Indian campsite with artifacts and altered terrain. The new trail must not go through this. Alden knows its location and could be consulted before start of the project.

From the trail junction west of Kearsarge Pass down to Kearsarge Lakes the trails are in pretty poor condition: wide, rutted, multiple trails filled with loose debris. This could be remedied by a crew: make one reasonable trail and naturalize the old scars. Probably some rerouting would be involved. Total distance is $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile.

On the east side of Sand Flat on Charlotte Ridge there is a 100 yard section of steep trail which is deeply eroded (exposed tree roots) which could easily be rerouted with one switchback, and the old scar filled. Ample materials are immediately available.

Much of the trail between Sand Flat and Charlotte Lake could be reworked to advantage, but the worst is two parallel sections of about 50 yards each which are steep and deeply eroded. A reroute would be necessary, probably involving one switchback, and the naturalization of the scars.

This same crew, during this same summer, could do the projected and discussed work on the north side of Glen Pass. On the south side, much weak-armed ranger labor was expended in 1984 and for now I think that section could be maintained to standard by the local ranger. I would make this part of my 1986 plan.

In late September 551 and 553 hiked over Forester Pass and down Bubbs Creek to Cedar Grove. Probably some ideas for trail work were generated by that excursion. They should be consulted.

Two trees need to be cut at Charlotte Lake. One, a short distance west of the cabin, and the second, between the lake and the meadow below. The first is not critical though it is lying in the trail. The second is forcing stock to go around, which are churning a grassy place.

Outhouses need new holes. Definitely: at Vidette Meadow and at Charlotte Lake. Almost ready, and if there is a crew, take advantage of them: lower Kearsarge. I can do this work but it will be time consuming, and the Charlotte patrol area provides enough else to keep me occupied.

It could be worth considering whether the Charlotte and Vidette outhouses are necessary. They may not be. Not everyone uses them and I haven't seen evidence that the human cathole system is causing pollution. Perhaps next spring Alden, Paul, John, and I can discuss this and make a decision.

Two fences need to be rebuilt. Late in the season they were not holding stock: 1) Fence below Charlotte Lake Meadow. 2) Upper Bubbs Creek fence. Posts need to be reset and wire needs to be replaced/spliced. I stress, substantial work needs to be done at the beginning of next season to make these fences functional. Otherwise there will be substantial grazing in Vidette Meadow and Charlotte Lake Meadow. Again, I can do this

On photographing jets: I have learned that the rim of the Kern Canyon is too high. One needs to be no more than a few hundred feet above the treetops.

A 300mm lens can work. A 2x tele-extender makes this effectively a 600mm. However, there is a loss of effective film speed with any tele-extender and that can make shutter speed a factor in handheld photography. A fast film would compensate. To date I have used Kodachrome 64 which is my personal film of choice, and the film which Sierra District issues. There are some very fast films available.

With a fast film, 300mm lens, 3x tele-extender, and a good position, the photographer should be able to almost fill his frame with the aircraft. What we don't have is the 3x extender. Depending on the seriousness of this project, Sierra District could consider purchasing one, or, I might consider purchasing one as part of my personal equipment if it were sure that I would be doing more of this work in the future. This is something Sierra District should discuss with me early this winter if it sounds reasonable.

In the two efforts to date in which I photographed an aircraft I was really too far away. The most important improvement for improved photo quality will be improved cliffside position.

Something that could possibly work for 1986: Alden and family to my station for two-three weeks and I to Tyndall to photograph jets and do other work. One advantage: it would give me time to wait out the periods of quiescence which seem to periodically strike. I could be working firesites, ect. in the upper Kern Basin and Wright Lakes areas while the jets are elsewhere.

I have stationed myself in the vicinity of Whitney Creek and Wallace Creek for photographing. What I haven't tried is just west of Tyndall cabin on the rim of the upper Kern canyon. This is where jets are beginning their climb. Some might be in excellent position, some might be too high. It seems worth a stakeout.

A final unpredictable, but something a photographer should have in mind: at the time of day when the aircraft is backlit its number could be quite difficult to read in the photo. An exposure compensation, especially with black and white film, could help. A problem with using black and white is that in this project most likely the photographer would not be doing the developing, and the lab would not know how it was exposed. This can reduce the chances for a good negative and print. Is there a darkroom at Ash Mountain?

Season totals: 715 miles, 1265 people, 129 firesites, 9 burlap sacks trash.

Happy New Year! XOXOX! --Randy Morgenson