

CRABTREE YEAR END REPORT/Durkee 1988

STATS:

Visitor Contacts	1680	
Miles hiked	683	
Trash (sacks)		12
Firerings utterly obliterated	128	
Citations		0 (!)
Warnings		12
(5 tent on mdw; 4 fire; 4 trash)		
Searches		2
(one assist, USFS)		
Medivacs		3
(one stock, one helicopter)		
Roofs Shingled		1
Steel Doors Installed	1	

Summary

A quiet season on the frontier. The Eastern Kern remained blissfully free of the mayhem and carnage that disturbed the **wa** of our colleagues to the north and west. The station showed some signs of someone having tried to break in with an ice ax. No serious damage was done, but Crabtree should also have a steel door and frame put in. The station itself was a greasy mess from the Snow Survey's tenure. It's well known my standards in neatness are not very high, but this year was more than I was willing to accept. Dirty pots & pans, greasy utensils & plates and dog hairs everywhere--it appears those folks didn't use soap at all and showed no regard whatsoever for our cabins. It's long past time to put an end to DWR's use of the stations. We can do the job more cheaply, more efficiently and certainly with much less impact on both the buildings and the Park.

Helped Jack Vance & Paul Atkinson put a shingle roof onto Tyndall. In the Fall, someone broke into Tyndall, used some Survey food, then nailed the door shut again. Jack came back and we put in a bombproof (!) 10 ga. steel door.

Visitation seemed about normal. I took a critical look at Guitar Lake and reconsidered the ongoing outhouse vs. no outhouse problem. There is no question that there's a problem up there but I'm not sure it needs an outhouse as a solution. Moffitt said he'd help put it in, but would have nothing to do with it afterwards. There are only two places to put one, and the best is right in an avalanche path. I'd like to try closing off a bunch of campsites up there and placing a lot of signs telling people where and how to shit before going to the outhouse stage. The instructions on permits on how to

shit are not very good. We need a detailed separate (?) sheet telling folks that giardia and feces are directly related, and where and how they should crap. Crabtree '88

If that and signs don't seem to be working at Guitar, then I suppose an outhouse is the only alternative. The garbage can/fly out is the only practical method, I'm afraid. There is no question that people would leave garbage in any type of composting toilet. I saw the ones at Trail Camp on the east side. Despite huge signs telling people not to do it, and giving the reasons, the bags of compost looked to be 1/4 full of uncompostable trash. That is unacceptable. The helicopter pilot said he could probably sling both toilets at once. If it fills up at the same rate as the Whitney one, only one flight a season would be required. I think, though, that signs and rearranging campsites will work. I'll know by the end of next season.

Finally, it seems to me that we need a better approach to year end summaries. In the Spring, most of us can't remember our suggestions from the season before and it's often too late since many of the strategy decisions are made in the winter. I would think a backcountry meeting in late August/early Sept. would be very useful. Some centralized station (Charlotte?) for a couple of days with all the supervisors and all the rangers and maybe even permit folks to discuss various ideas. Or the meetings could rotate, so specific problems of each area could be looked at and solutions discussed.

Also, an M.D. on the east side asked Alden if we needed help in medical training. We could consider talking her into coming into the backcountry for a one day seminar combined with the season-end review, and could shorten frontcountry training by a day or two!!

MUCKING UP A MEADOW ON A GOLDEN EVENING

by G. "Bob Frost" Durkee

Whose glen this is, I think I know.
His station's up the trail though;
He'll not see my critters chomp their bit
And fill his meadow up with shit.

My horses and mules take off with a bound,
kick up their hooves and tear up the ground.
Between the trail and forest's green,
Chunks of sod fall into the stream.

This fragile space they paw and chew,
Why it's allowed I haven't a clue.
I give my cowboy hat a shake
and wonder if we've made a mistake.
(The only other sound's the hiss
of steamin', stinkin' horses' piss.)

But meadows are useless: tall and green.
So I have pastures to crop,
And miles to go before I stop,
And miles to go before I stop.

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Suggestions

1) The fire limit for the area definitely has to be revised. I consider this a critical problem. I realize it doesn't have you folks too excited, but 11,200' is much too high. Places like Wallace and Wright Creeks have legal firings in incredibly sensitive areas where the only wood is from Foxtail snags. This is unacceptable. If the limit were lowered to 10,400, packers could still have their precious campfires at creek crossings without it being a great hardship. As I remember, the only reason 11,200' was chosen was because it was a heavy line on the map--with no regard to what was ecologically reasonable. We could easily clean up the main fire pits above 10,400' in a season.

2) Why do we go through the same hassles with the same packers **every** year on where to tie and graze their horses, not bring in over the limit etc. etc. and then, essentially, reward them by allowing travel to Crabtree Lakes, Mt. Whitney & etc. They do not earn the trust of increased access.

3) Any new money that appears magically out of the sky should start going into our salaries rather than gear or more positions. We should start making as many people as possible subject-to-furlough under the Career Seasonal status. This can be used for less than 180 day appointments. (Backcountry LE rangers at Mammoth Cave were recently upgraded to '7's. Scholly apparently upgraded all his permanent LE rangers to at least '7's and was trying to do the same to most of his seasonals.)

4) Oh, woe is us.

CRABTREE NEEDS:

- 1) A new hammer
- 2) Steel door and frame for front door.
- 3) One pack hacksaw blades

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Cross Country Use

The main cross country route in the Crabtree area is from Rock Creek/Sky Blue Lake to Crabtree Lakes via Crabtree (formerly Macadie (sp ??)) Pass. From June to early Sept. it probably gets 5 to 20 people a day. For the most part, physical impact is still within tolerable limits except possibly at Sky Blue Lake. There, impact is approaching unacceptable because of the fragile meadow surrounding the lake and the presence of old snags in the area as a source of wood for illegal campfires.

The use trail through the area is definitely more pronounced than when I worked the station in '77. While use by small groups (3-6) probably doesn't have that much effect, it's the large groups that create the problems. For instance, I found a Sierra Club group of 20 camped at Sky Blue, every one of whom had their tent pitched on the meadow. There is not room anywhere on the route for groups of more than 6 or so to be camped so as to not be set up on vegetation. This is also true of the Ionian Basin and, to a certain extent, Lake Basin.

As such, we should follow Yosemite's lead and reduce group size on cross-country routes to at least 10, preferably 7. Additionally, we're starting to see groups of 20 and 25 again from trailheads that have large quotas. This has to be reduced for the same reasons. We need group size limits of 15 for trail use. Large groups are, on the whole, too noisy and certainly an esthetic impact on other backcountry users.