

1989 Rae Lakes

The summer of 1989 reflected another low snow year. Upon arriving at RAE LAKES in June all the creek crossings were fordable and there was only 150 yards of snow (1' deep) on the Northside of Glen Pass. Visitation seemed to be up earlier in the season. I contacted 508 groups and 1731 visitors.

I hiked a total of 1087 miles. There were 3 helicopter medivacs in my area this year - one for a possible ectopic pregnancy - second for tornd ligaments in knee area and tornd cartilage in ankle cage - occurred by falling over with full pack on - third for a broken leg - hiker got off the trail to wait for hiking partner and fell on loose rock. Besides these a medical run sheet and call in were done for a minor medical problem, 3 ace bandages were given out (2 for sprained ankles + 1 for knee support), 3 hikers were treated for bad blisters and one hiker was treated for snow blindness.

Two citations were issued this season. Both were issued to the same party - one for an illegal campfire and 1 for hunting dogs in the backcountry. These violations occurred in October and the cited party was fully aware that they were breaking park regs. but thought all the backcountry rangers had left the mountains and they wouldn't get caught - Syringe!

This summer I continued the closure to all camping on the isthmus between the Upper two RAE LAKES and Around Dollar Lk. The posting of

my written sign and maps with these closed areas marked helped with compliance. The effect was having to move only one party at either location for compliance in a closed area - Close to 100% Compliance.

This season I cleaned all of RAE Lakes Basin, Baxter Lakes, Dragon Lake, Sixty Six, Woods Creek, Twin lakes, Gardiner Basin and Woods Lake Basin. I broke up a total of 188 fire rings - 145 of these were removed while the remaining 43 were completely broken down + rebuilt. I cleaned out 46 fire rings of ash and garbage and collected a total of 29 Burlap bags of trash. Two burlap bags of trash still remain at Woods Creek Ranger Cache and one at the Baxter Creek Stock Camp. The rest were either flown out or packed out of the backcountry by N.P.S.

I liked to make a special note of the Stock camp locations in my area. There are four below fire closure and are listed as follows:

Baxter Creek; Wood Creek (just below upper Castle Domes Drift fence); Woods Creek (1/4 mile above Castle Domes Meadow); Woods Creek (just below 10,000 ft elevation).

Tim Lovens Cedar Grove Park Station had numerous trips into Woods Creek and RAE lakes this summer, and their fire rings and camp etiquette were not always acceptable. Their camps at Baxter Creek and Upper Castle Domes had horse manure throughout camp and their fire rings were left messy or at

Baxter Creek Camp the fire ring was dug, on - top, cans, glass and ash and dumped behind a tree.

I am not anti-stock but do believe that a concession man in the park to make a profit off the resource should be required to have immaculate camps. Tim Govein has many highly qualified and conscientious folks working for him, but it just takes one large stock group that does not have these same ethics to make a mess of an area. I found it very hard to monitor these problems with out prior knowledge of their trips and destinations.

It was just by chance I contacted some of his trips in my area and many times I heard about them after they were gone.

I would like to see the pack stations both on the East and West side of the Sierra required to call-in their trips to either Sierra District or the permit issuing station or get their permits issued by Park Personnel. I don't know what the feasibility of this would be but protecting the park resource and ultimately educating all backcountry users to National Park Service Wilderness Ethics is our goal. It seems that Park Service Rangers issuing permits would have better training and background in this than a concession man pack station.

At the end of my season all the rings in my area were rebuilt to three rock/sunken fire rings. I have found these

to be the best for warmth, cooking and being the least obtrusive in the backcountry. Also since the large rocks are set in the ground the foundation, even if backpackers add rocks, is still there - thus easier for rangers to restore and clean.

RAE #2

The public still needs to be taught that small fires are better than large bonfires and that fire rings are not garbage pits. Foil is almost always found in fire pits and when burnt it breaks into very small pieces - It's almost impossible to get all these pieces separated from the ash.

Bears were not a problem this year at RAE who on Woods Creek Crossing. Both of these locations have bear boxes and as long as backpackers were using them their food was safe. Bears were still observed in these areas so it was essential to keep food in the bear proof lockers.

The pros seem to far outweigh the cons of bear boxes being used in the backcountry. While the bear boxes concentrate use around their locations these sites were unimpacted before the bear boxes since they are natural destinations for hikers doing the RAE who loop. Also while concentrating camping in these areas the rest of the areas is kept more pristine. It seems that on such a heavy use loop this is a more desired effect. I have heard it argued that

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bear boxes are obtusive in the backcountry. My observation was that before bear boxes I was constantly cleaning up bear garbage, cutting down rope used for counterbalancing from trees + cables and seeing foil, plastic and other manmade garbage in bear scat. The bear boxes seem much less obtusive than this.

Most important the bears boxes are keeping human food away from bears. Although the bears are still humanized and seek out human food - they just aren't getting it except on RARE occasions. My great hope is for the next generation of bears - with the bear boxes - not getting human food and being much more wild.

Laurie Church and the CCC's spent all summer working the John Muir Trail from Woods Creek to Glen Pass. Their work was that of protectionists and their dedication and enthusiasm was a wonder to witness.

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I am still recommending that Sixty lakes trail as well as Woods Lake trail be put into "maintained trail status". Both these trails get heavy use - Sixty lakes from backpackers and Woods Lake as the result of being a popular stock trip as well as a frequent backpacking destination. There is serious resource damage occurring

in both these areas because of the level of use and the trails long standing disrepair. Much of the trail in Woods Lake Basin is placed in very fragile stringer meadows.

A request for several signs has been made for next season. The No Fires Above 10,000 ft in Kings Canyon Nat'l Park signs need to be placed at Sawmill Pass, Baxter Pass, 10,000 ft contour on Woods Creek, and 10,000 ft contour below RAE hks on the JMT. Two signs need to be placed on either side of the Woods Creek Crossing Bridge stating 1 Person Capacity - Cross with Care - Use Handrail.

On Upper RAE hks Basin a sign needs to be placed for the Bear box stating -

↑ BEAR BOX

150 Yds

A few cabin improvements were made this season. These include a new bear proof storage box with hasp and lock, two sets of book shelves were built, and new carpet pieces were acquired - I used these in the loft since they were light colored and would have been filthy in no time if used on the main floor.

My season at RAE hks ended on September 20th when I was flown to Charlotte Lk and continued my backcountry duties there until October 20th. Domo Melungo and I patrolled and cleaned both RAE hks and Charlotte Lake Arms for

This month. We cleaned and restored
all tree rings before season end and
watched the snows finally come to the
mountains. It's been a great summer
and I hope to be working in these
magnificent mountains again next summer.