

October 18, 1991

End of Season Report: Rae Lakes/Durkee

A singularly uneventful season at Rae Lakes this year. The high point was the arrival of the long-awaited Traeger pellet stove which, alas, failed to work. Jack Vance and I worked with the manufacturer and they came up with what is hoped is a solution. If so, we should consider using these stoves at other BC stations to stop the incredible impact we're having leaving a ring of stumps and cut trees around each station.

There was little stock use in the area. One trip (8 head, two nights) into 60 Lakes Basin from Cedar Grove Pack Station. The limit is one night. When I met the packers, it was clear they intended to stay two nights without prior approval from the park service. Since the limit is one night and 15 head, it seemed reasonable to allow two nights with 8. Ordinarily, this minor attempt to evade regulations would not be worth noting, except at the end of the season Rob Hayden ran into another trip from Cedar Grove Pack Station where the packer was camped at Rae Lakes--also illegal. The packer claimed not to have been told it was illegal. Rob cited him, though the packer commented that \$50.00 "wasn't much" and didn't seem too concerned. It seems clear that none of our efforts to get Tim Loverin to comply with park regulations have been effective and that we need a much stronger approach to gain compliance.

Baxter Canyon is an area that should receive increased attention by the area ranger. I (and previous rangers) found a number of spent rifle shells (30-30 and larger) that appear to be from the last 10 years. I believe (because of bones in the area) that poaching of Bighorn Sheep was not unusual in the not too distant past. There are also a number of "old timers" using the area who do not seem to be sympathetic to changing camping practices and who continue to build fires and generally run amok. I cited two people in the area for illegal fires this season. In short, we have to increase our vigilance here and probably try to run a late season patrol in the area. I also investigated an incident where a hiker fired 8-12 shots towards a bear, probably with a Walther .380. I was unable to get enough PC for a search of the suspect's pack nor get a consent search. The bear was not hit nor did the shots scare him away.

From 9/20 to 10/19 I patrolled the Kern southern boundary on hunting patrol, coordinating the effort with Rob Hayden who worked out of the Kern RS. There appeared to be only one party of hunters camped well outside the Park in Big Whitney meadow who hunted right up to the boundary, but showed no evidence of entering the Park. I had made sure to tell the local pack stations that rangers would be in the area late in the Fall (no specific date given). I'm sure this information was passed on to local hunters.

MILES HIKED: 720

VISITOR CONTACTS: 1600

CITATIONS: 4 (3 FIRE, 1 DOG)

VERBAL WARNINGS: 130 (TENT ON MEADOW, FIRES, RUNNING AMOK)

TRASH: 350 LBS

FIRERINGS DESTROYED: 105

SAR/EMS: STEPHENS SEARCH, PATCHED UP ONE BADLY LACERATED LEG

BIRTHDAY PARTIES: 1, 50TH YEAR EXTRAVAGANZA

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1) I noticed that the Kern trail crew (and according to Perrelli at Roaring River, Dave Karplace's crew) had cut at least two standing trees for firewood--one to supply wood at the Tyndall RS. A memo was written 10 years ago prohibiting this practice. It should be reemphasized. I believe that rangers and trail crew now constitute the 2nd largest impact on the backcountry (following stock use). We've got to get our Administrative act together.

2) The plumbing at the Corp of Engineers snowy pillow at Tyndall looks tenuous. I think it ought to be redone. Much of the pipe and hose is exposed and there is a significant danger of it leaking, spilling a large amount of toxic anti-freeze.

3) We need to establish standards on what criteria to use to put in bear boxes. Several are proposed in areas which have only marginal bear problems but, if a box is put in, will significantly increase use in the area. Wheelbarrow camp on the North side of Forester Pass is an example. This has always been a small, moderately used camp area. If a box is put in it will increase use well beyond its limits. Up to now, boxes have only gone into areas that were already pretty well bombed out. I believe that should continue to be the overriding criteria.

4) Some organization is apparently putting new register boxes on summits and bolting them into place. These are much larger than the usual Sierra Club boxes and uglier. We should make an effort to find out who these folks are and prohibit or regulate their actions to a very few popular peaks.

5) Somehow or other, there is still an outhouse proposed for Guitar Lake. I strongly oppose this--they do nothing but create more problems, attracting marmots and filling up with garbage. Although Guitar Lake has sanitation problems, I found conditions were helped last year by a strongly worded sign. Until this method obviously fails, there is no need for an outhouse.

6) Bill Wyman of Thatcher School is apparently using his "traditional" cross-country routes in the Rock Creek and Tyndall/Wright Lakes area. His actual impact with 3-8 burros is minimal, but illegal. We should either grant an exemption or write him a letter asking him to stop. I recommend prohibiting this practice.

7) Post a sign at the Rock Creek crossing warning people not to descend cross country to the Kern because of the danger.

8) To impress packers we're serious about enforcing Park regulations, automatically cite them into court and move to have them suspended for several weeks from packing in the Park. With repeated violations, we should make a serious effort to suspend the permittee for a week or two when in flagrant violation of regulations.

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RECOMMENDED PURCHASES FOR 1992

1) Check with Jack Vance. If we get the Traeger stove to work, we'll probably need a hotter burning pellet for next year. He'll know what kind to get.

2) Ideally, it would be nice to convert all the stations to solar power panels with a radio battery recharger. I don't think being exposed to white gas fumes over the years is especially healthy. I would think that the payback time for the system (batteries & white gas saved) would be fairly quick.

3) For Commissioned rangers, we've never had a secure place to store our weapon. The Fraternal Order of Police sells a locked steel box that can be screwed down (combination lock). It doesn't meet NPS 9 standards for storage, but it's only \$25.00 and better than nothing. Also, I've been using a fanny pack holster for the last two years. It is inconspicuous--maintaining the low profile required in the backcountry, but probably as accessible as a regular holster. It's made by DeSantis holster in New York and is about \$50.00. I've got the phone numbers for both of the above if you want to look into it (and can show you what I've got).

4) It's time to inoculate at least the seasonal EMT's for Hepatitis B. Rob and I will be down this winter at least for the snow survey and could receive the first shot then, with the follow up during the spring & summer. This should be a standard procedure for all first responders.