

Rock Creek, summer 1992

I hiked in on June 16, after waiting in Lone Pine for three days for suitable flying weather, so supplies could be flown in.

The station and surrounding areas were in good shape. The snow surveyors left the cabin in excellent condition from winter use.

Visitation did not pick up until the middle of July but things did not get busy until August.

There were four non-stat medivacs in the Rock Creek drainage this summer, three initiated by me and Rob from Crabtree one.

No major problems occurred this summer; except the regular extensive meadow damage at Lower Rock Creek Lake and surrounding stringer meadows due to the presence of Cottonwood pack stations repeated use of these meadows. Dennis Winchester is not interested in taking trips to the lower meadows where grazing is better, where less meadow damage would occur. He will not change this practice unless the park makes some new restrictions in this area.

I recommend making the Lower Rock Creek area a one night twelve head limit. This will make Cottonwood go elsewhere or bring feed. These high elevation meadows are too fragile for the heavy use they have been getting the past several years. Mike Neuman thinks that a maximum number of stock nights per season will work but I disagree because I do not feel that Cottonwood would be truthful in reporting use, thus making this an inaccurate system.

One citation was issued to Cottonwood this season for grazing before opening date. Last year we had the same problem with Cottonwood.

Another problem in this area is stock use in the Mitre Basin. The trail is very unsafe for stock here. There is one spot in particular where animals have to "lunge" (packers words) over rocks and it is very unsafe. The packers now detour around another spot farther up, using the

other side of the creek, thus making a second trail and causing a lot more resource damage.

Stock should not be allowed above Pinned Up meadow and should only be allowed up this far if the trail is maintained. More trails is not the parks present philosophy so really stock should not be allowed above Lower Rock Creek Lake. All portions of this trail are badly eroded due to heavy stock use and also unsafe!

I do not understand how the park is so strict on general regulations but allows this unchecked commercial use. This double standard is not in the best interest of our park. It does not take a scientist to see that this is mis-use of our resources, it is visible to almost any layman. Jody Winchester says that "we get our water above where the stream comes into the meadow because of the manure in the water", well how about the rest of us down stream who drink the water. The area I speak of is so trampled and abused that it is embarrassing to whoever is the ranger here. Enough on this...

Another problem in the Upper Kern area is the complex wording on fire regulations, 10,800 here, 11,200 there... All areas except Crabtree are 10,800 and Crabtree and Crabtree Lakes is the busiest area of all. This makes no sense. There is one certain older backpacker who uses this area and likes a fire, so we accommodate him and compromise our park resources. Political ambitions should not influence us in how we make our regulations.

Bears have not been a problem in this area since bear boxes. Only three reports all summer from the Upper Kern and two of these were because people were not properly informed in Lone Pine.

The bear problem on Bubbs Creek upsets me. No box at wheelbarrow camp is a mistake. Two boxes at Center Basin junction is not the answer, it will only add more use to an already over-use area and not solve the

problem at wheelbarrow. Some people need to get higher up on Forester's either for safety or physical limitations. Unaware campers at wheelbarrow are "sitting ducks", thus keeping the bears actively seeking food up and down Bubbs Creek. How about the cub that died last year, have we forgotten about that!

Not much else to report, as usual all contacts with backpackers were of a positive nature and no infractions of the regulations occurred where a verbal warning was not enough.

Acomplishments were burning the large stump near cabin, building new shelves in cabin, putting flooring in the loft for snow entry and keeping all firerings ground level and dug out.

It was a very satisfying and rewarding summer and I look forward to more Sierra District summers.

DARIO MALENGO

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