

HOCKETT MEADOWS RANGER STATION  
YEAR-END REPORT  
1995

I was on duty at Hockett Meadows Ranger Station from June 19th to October 13, 1995. I volunteered in the Kern Canyon from October 15th to October 23, 1995. Due to heavy spring snow, I was flown into the Hockett Ranger Station on June 19th. The station was melted out. There was three to four feet of snow on the meadow and six to eight feet of snow covering the trails on the plateau with drifts to twelve feet. I brought my three head of stock into the backcountry on August 4th when the Atwell-Hockett trail was opened to stock. (Cleared of downed trees and most snow)

During the season, I patrolled 913 miles of trail. (527 miles patrolled on stock and 386 miles on foot.) I contacted 892 visitors this season. (5 day hikers, 517 backpackers, 6 hunters and 364 stock users with 550 head of stock.)

The unusual snowpack was slow to melt off the trails. Snow and high creek crossings caused some visitors to turn back. Mineral King Ranger Station did an excellent job of informing visitors of the trail and backcountry conditions. They discouraged people from attempting the high passes in the early summer and directed most visitors into the Hockett Plateau. Many of these visitors were not prepared or equipped for the icy snow conditions and would probably have found themselves in trouble if they had attempted a pass. Many people lost the trail at Horse Creek to Hockett meadow, due to snow, even with the tree markers. The markers were difficult to follow with all the downed trees. I spent most of June and July chopping or cutting out downed trees and marking the trail junctions and digging out trail signs at junctions.

The Atwell-Hockett trail was opened to stock in late July. The Tar Gap trail in early August and the South Fork trail on August 17th.

Due to slow snow melt and flooding of the South Fork of the Kaweah, all meadows opened later than the scheduled "wet year" dates.

A total of 59 firepits were worked in the Hockett area this season. I obliterated 8 others. The Hockett meadow bridge camp and the stock camp recieved a lot of use this year, along with the South Fork stock camps. Evelyn Lake recieved higher day use, as many backpackers camped at Horse Creek and day hiked to the plateau to avoid carrving heavv packs through the slippery snow. Summit Lake is still a problem area. With its relatively easy access from the south, it recieves a lot of use and unfortunately abuse. It was accessable to stock use from the south in early July. There is still a problem with foil being burned and trash left in firepits. I estimate 100 pounds of garbage was taken out of pits in the Hockett area this season.

I saw 12 bears in the area this summer with visitors reporting 16. None of these entered campsites or caused any problems to visitors. (or visitors to them!) I observed two bald eagles in a tree just west of the ranger station and in October I saw one or two flying in the Kern Canyon. (It may be a nesting pair at Little Kern Lake)

There were three Medivacs from the Hockett this season. One was evacuated on NPS stock, one by Mineral King Pack Station and one by NPS helicopter. First Aid assists included: dislocated finger, sprained ankle, blisters, splinters, scrapes and sunburn. Also, self administered first aid to yours truely for an axe-bite.

First Aid and Penicillin shots for two weeks to an injured trail crew horse, Little Brown, and escort out of the backcountry. First Aid and care for one week to a lame Kern Ranger horse, JR, and escort from Kern R.S. to Quaking Aspen.

I used 9 non-rechargeable radio batteries during the season. My radio had a problem with sending and recieving this spring. It was sent out and repaired and worked fine the rest of the season. Thanks go to the Superintendant for loaning his MT 1000! There seemed to be a lot of problems with the repeaters this summer. Most of the time, it seemed that those of us in the backcountry could recieve fine, but couldn't send or be heard.

RESOURCE

Historic Hockett Barn: The barn flooded this spring sometime before my arrival. Jack Vance was notified and explained that on rare years that the "Hockett Lake" fors in front of the Ranger Station, then the barn gets flooded with snow melt coming through the walls. There were water marks on the wall about 18" up to prove this, but I also think there was water leakage from the roof this year and some of the tongue and groove ceiling shows warpage and water damage. The Barley Bin was flooded and 4 bags of barley were rotted. Any items stored on the floor were soaked and items stored in bucket were ruined. A 55 gallon barrel was taken over for barley storage and another flown in to use for winter snow survey garbage. A 50 pound salt block had been stored on the floor and apparently melted during the flood. There is warnage to the floor boards on the north end of the cabin, but this may be old damage.

Historic Quinn Patrol Cabin: A four foot section of roof cap shingles came off the cabin and the roofing felt is obvious. Other shingles are loose or missing. I put the shingles under the cabin by the back door.

The Hockett plateau seemed to have a high bear population, with 28 sightings and bear tracks on the trails was common. In the fall, tracks between the station and Atwell Mill were thick and constant, but the bears were more elusive.

No meadows were dry enough to open on the scheduled "wet year" dates. On August 1st; Hockett Meadow, Lower South Fork Meadow and Sand Meadow were opened to grazing. On August 15th; South Fork Meadow(Rock Camp) and Tuohy Creek Meadows were opened. On August 25th; Cyclone Meadow, Green Meadow, Summit Lake and Blossom Lake Meadows were opened. Most areas were lightly grazed or not grazed at all this season. The heavier grazed areas included: Upper and Lower South Fork Meadows. Stock use seemed very low this year. There were hundreds of trees down on the trails, some resource damage occured when stock had to go into boggy areas to get around them. Some of this damage can be avoided if the trail crew will log all the trails before going on to

project work and waterbars etc. Some trails were not cleared until September and a few were never cleared.

Meadow Monitoring: In September, I conducted residual biomass monitoring on 4 meadows in the Hockett area. Along with the new maps and photos.

Meadow "Repeat" Photos: I took repeat photos for most of the meadows that needed updating. I was unable to get back to South Fork Meadow or Cow Camp Meadow.

1,000 Hour Fuel Moisture Contents: Weighed aerial and ground fuel logs and radio'd results to FOX twice a month.

There were two lightning caused fires in the area, both were put out. One in Eden Grove and the Cahoon Fire. There were no trail closures.

#### HOCKETT TRAIL CREW: Projects and Assists

The trail crew came into the Hockett on August 11th and left on September 12. They rebuilt many hitchrails that were broken by snow. Thanks to trail crew Lorenzo for fixing the visitors hitchrail by the station and cutting me firewood rounds. As a stock crew, they need a full time packer or someone in charge of caring for the stock. The administrative pasture can not handle that many head for an extended period. At the end of August, although the crews daily animals(6) were in the pasture all week, when the packer came in overnight all his and their stock was put out in Hockett Meadow to graze. Even with this plan the grass was very low in the fall and I often put my ranger stock out to graze in the open pasture. If a packer were on site, then their animals should always graze the meadow and only stay in the night before a pack trip. The packer should also be willing to repair the fences that his stock tears down and care and doctor his stock and not rely on the ranger to do his work for him. A big Thanks to Kern Packer Ray for riding into the Hockett and helping with the injured trail crew horse and three days of fence building and repairs. We were able to replace 36 fence posts. Thanks to Leroy for flying in 45 fence posts, rolls of wire and for the new Echo chainsaw and fuel. Leroy was able to get to the Hockett for a visit in August. Thanks to T.C. Lorenzo for fence repairs.

There are two bridges with broken stringers. One on the Evelyn Lake trail and the other is north of South Fork Meadow. The bridge at the South Fork Meadow/Lower South Fork Meadow junction was flood damaged-both approaches were washed out and need to be refilled. All trails need a lot of overhead pruning and brushing. The south fork trail from Clough cave needs alot of pruning and brushing for the first 3 to 4 miles. The crew brushed along some of the Atwell-Hockett trail this year.

The pasture fence has 36 new posts, it will need another 40 or so replaced and the new wire put up. I put in 4 new metal posts and reset and straightened 1/3 of the metal posts that were damaged from the heavy snow and because the fence was not dropped last fall. We need to find an easy way to attatch and drop the wire to the metal posts. Perhaps the plastic "hot wire" connectors would work. This is on a wish list, apparently there are differend sizes of posts??

Kern Canyon Fence Project: Golden Trout drift/boundary fence was rebuilt in October. I was on the project with members of the Backcountry Horsemen of California. Twelve posts were replaced, three strands of new wire put up, the old wire was dropped and rolled and a new wire gate constructed. There are ten extra rolls of wire still stored at the Kern R.S. Thanks to the Kern trail crew for leaving the split cedar posts!! Thanks to the 7 folks who worked on the project and to the brave mules that carried those weird loads across the Kern River!

#### LOCAL PROJECTS-ranger

Pasture fence rebuilding in spring

Cut 25 trees off of fence line

Moved 48 trees off trails, chopped 36 trees off trails and cut 72 trees off trail with new chainsaw

Replaced 36 wooden fence posts and 4 metal posts on pasture fence.

Removed nails from trees

Painted and updated bulletin board

Replaced missing shingles on station and barn

Removed 4 rolls of wire found along trail

"Repeat" meadow photos of area

## Local Projects-ranger Continued

1,000 hour fuel moisture content study, weighed twice a month (to FOX)  
 Winter Snow Survey Food Inventories at Hockett R.S. and Quinn R.S.  
 Restocked firewood at Hockett R.S. and Quinn R.S.  
 Hauled in old fence posts and cut up for firewood  
 Ongoing litter patrol and firepit cleaning  
 Trail flagging from Corner creek to Atwell Mill with Linda Wallace  
 Cleaning out barn after flooding and disposing of bad barley etc.  
 Repaired well pipe broken off last fall  
 Put wire on some hitch rails

## Projects For 1996

Replace Ridge cap shingles at Quinn R.S.  
 Replace bear cable by station (New cable needed)  
 Continue Pasture Fence rebuilding-need more posts flown in. (40)  
 Replace R.S. "Hockett Meadow" sign-it was sent out to be repaired

## OTHER OBSERVATIONS

The Forest Service had trail crews out this year, they cleared the trail to Tuohy Gap and the trails to Summit Lake and the Quinn entrances.

The Hockett deer herd was 21 animals at it's highest count, five of those being bucks. In 1979, I seem to remember counting up to 60. Is there a known reason for this decline?

Mineral King Pack Station had a mule wreck near the east fork bridge, on the Atwell-Hockett trail in late July. The packer did not report the incident. I later learned from Linda Wallace that it was a serious wreck and three mules died and two of the mules were winched out by the trail crew - the third mule was never located.

There is a new metal post, but no new sign, at the Pecks Canyon Entrance.

The sink drain at the station drains slowly. I don't know if the sump is full or the pipe may be clogged. A new plunger and snake are needed.

The outhouse may need to be moved next year.(station)

## EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

- 7-20 Pre-Search, tracked a boyscout troop through the snow to Summit lake. Checked with visitors about them and reported to Sequoia District and Lodgepole. (They were not yet overdue-exit F.S.)
- 8-5 Responded to report of trauma injury at Clover Creek on the Tar Gap trail. Assessed injury, immobilized fractured arm and radio'd in.
- 8-6 Medivac, man with fractured upper arm from Clover Creek to Mineral King via NPS stock with assist from Steve Klump.
- 8-23 Billy Hancock of the trail crew, encountered a woman with a fractured ankle at South Fork Pasture and arranged a flight out.
- 8-30 Search, Kern Canyon and vicinity-Lorenzo Search.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

- 7-17 Verbal Warning - bears and food storage
- 7-19 Citation - Leaving Campsite Unclean (Food Storage)
- 7-28 Verbal Warning - bears and food storage, Mineral King Pack Station.
- 7-30 Verbal Warning - bears and food storage, Mineral King Pack Station.
- 8-1 Verbal Warning - bears and food storage, Large backpacking group.
- 8-10 Verbal Warning - Trash in firepit, Girlscout Troop
- 8-15 Verbal Warning - Tent on grass, Horse barley storage and bears. Balch Park Pack Station.
- 8-20 Verbal Warning - to clean all cans and foil from firepit - bears
- 9-25 Verbal Warning - Weapons during hunting season without permit.
- 9-27 BOLO - Two backpackers with weapons in backcountry.

## VISITOR ASSISTS

6-24 Search for lost watch

7-9 Recieved found knife and report

7-17 Returned lost fishing license

7-26 First Aid check, upper respritory, backpacker hiked out

7-29 Helped packers with stock - Mineral King Pack Station

7-30 Mineral King Pack Station, tried to call MKPS about minor mule wreck rumors, heard about major mule wreck, radio's out about the items the group lost and needed. Loaned the group two sleeping bags. Helped packers with stock.

7-31 Radio'd out for stock to be sent in by MKPS to pick up a sick father and son from Evelyn Lake.

7-31 Radio'd out to MKPS to use the nacker in the area for the medi-vac, as the other group was not leaving yet.

8-11 First Aid, woman with a dislocated finger, she had realigned it. I checked swelling and splinted it. She was able to ride out. She later went to the MKRS to have her ring cut off as advised.

8-18 Loaned out the shoeing kit

8-24 Helped Mineral King packer to catch stock which were tangled up in their ropes and having a wreck.

9-3 Injured trail crew horse, First Aid and 2 weeks of care and shots. Puncture wound to right hind foot and cut on bulb.

9-5 Picked up Horse First Aid supplies and penicillin from HQ for injured trail crew horse.

9-18 After riding out for training, flew back into Hockett with the vet and Packer Ray. The vet deadened the horses food and I hiked out with Packer Ray leading the horse, while I herded from behind.

9-29 Assist with trail plans

10-8 Possible lost hiker-I contacted the man still in the Hockett area and informed him that his friend had hiked out to the trailhead.



I had another great year in the backcountry. It was a very special spring with all the snow. I learned a lot about snow bridges, high water crossings, ice axes and why people buy steel toed boots. I enjoyed re-exploring the Hockett Plateau, since I haven't been here since 1979. It was a cool summer with only two big lightening storms and millions of mosquitoes.(they were still out in mid-October!) I saw a lot of new country and trails and learned alot about the area. I had many visits from NPS folks who hiked or rode in. Thanks for the visits, mail delivery and other goodies.

Thanks to Sequoia District for all the help and supplies. Especially for the loaned radio and repair and return of mine. It's wonderful to have good communications! Thanks to the trail crew for some great meals and their help. Thanks again Leroy for the new chain-saw. And to my stock this year: Honey, Mitch, my favorite mule and Rambo who is turning into a good riding and lead horse.

Have a good winter and HAPPY TRAILS!!

Cindy J. Wood  
Hockett Meadows Ranger

P.S. I thought the First Responder/EMT training was great, especially the hands on senerio. It was an excellent refresher.