

SIERRA CREST SUBDISTRICT
END OF SEASON REPORT 1995

R. Cooman

KEY EVENTS:

Case incident records show some of the key events as follows:

A total of five searches occurred in the Sierra Crest area, one fatality involved. A total of two medical incidents occurred, involving evacuations (air?). One report received of disorderly conduct, one food storage violation, and several reports of the Evolution repeater out of service.

PROGRESS REPORTS:

Back country campsite rehabilitation and fire ring destructions continued within the Back country areas.

Anne Ashe was instrumental in moving and organizing the Sierra Crest BC cache into the Cedar Grove housing area. All returned equipment was repaired and/or cleaned as requested by rangers.

Anne compiled all the end of season Back country reports and documented the Back country ranger recommendations for the 1995 season. She was a tremendous asset to the Sierra Crest operation and should be recognized.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY MANAGEMENT:

Meadow management and Stock use concerns surfaced in all back country reports this year. The biggest concern voiced involves the damage of stock traffic to fragile meadow areas. Erosion of trails, use of unmaintained trails by stock parties and protection issues for the Bighorn and threatened and endangered amphibian and vegetation species.

I received suggestions for removal of the soil and moisture check dams, put in the 1960's, for the McClure and Colby Meadow areas. Discussions centered around the concern that these check dams were preventing the streams from returning to a narrow deep channel, although they have allowed the banks to stabilize.

A couple of suggestions were made for Compendium changes or additions;

All trash should be packed out and the burning of trash prohibited (KE).

Amendment to 36 CFR 2.1(c)(1) reading: "parts of plants may be gathered, in such a way as is non-fatal to the plant, by individuals for their immediate consumption". (RS)

This last comment may be a compendium addition for the Superintendent to consider.

Back country rangers would like to see enforcement of regulations prohibiting leaving property unattended for more than 24 hours.

The current USFS John Muir Wilderness map has the fire line at 10,400' for much of Kings Canyon. Correct this to 10,000'.

Consider a composting toilet to take care of the sewage disposal problem on the peninsula at Rae.

Additional sites for camping to be developed uphill from the current bearbox location at Arrowhead Lake was suggested.

We need a one night limit at Charlotte again. (There were many 50-100 person nights at Charlotte last year).

There should be designated tent sites between middle Rae Lake and Glen Pass. (Further information provided by RS in end of season report to Chief Ranger and Ralph Moore.)

Re-route Taboose Pass Trail out of the wet meadow.

The meadows on the Taboose Pass trail should be closed to grazing.

Stock should be required to bring feed past Woods Crossing on way up Woods Creek and past Baxter Meadow on way up south fork Woods Creek.

Do not permit the shoveling of passes to permit early stock access when meadows are too wet and fragile.

An issue in 60 Lakes Basin is that of the inhomogeneous drying of meadows and the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog. At any time in the summer, some part of some meadow will be dry enough for grazing, yet nearby will be a damp bog vulnerable to deep hoof prints. Some of these wet areas are where the frogs lay their eggs.

Big concern: possible forage competition with Bighorn Sheep at 60 Lakes Basin. Does RM need more documentation of human/stock /sheep interaction in this area? A potential VIP project was mentioned by RH and RS to have someone patrol this area taking note of Bighorn reactions to human and stock presence.

Suggest the wording on the Forage Guide to read: "All of the Rae Lakes Basin, from Glen Pass and Dragon Lake to the Baxter Creek drift fence, is closed to grazing."

The boundaries should be clarified, in the Meadow Management Plan and the 1994 Stock and Grazing regulations handout, for better enforcement in Woods Lake area.

What advice should the enforcement ranger offer the stock user who wants to comply to the partial closure of meadows?

It is unclear from the Meadow Management Plan how far off trail travel by stock is permitted.

Many fragile meadows are traversed to reach Twin Lakes, no established trail exists. What is the best way for us to protect this area?

Sixty Lakes Basin, Woods Lake Basin, and Baxter Lakes are more than ½ mile from a maintained trail. Yet stock are allowed at these locations. This issue should be clarified in some management plan.

Consider removal of drift fences no longer used, and the construction of new drift fences.

Close McClure Meadow and Colby Meadow to grazing. Allow packers to graze at Darwin Creek for up to three nights.

Definition of what makes an area a “stock camp” should be explicitly stated in the Meadow Management Guide.

Consider changing the stove at the Bench Lake Ranger station from a pellet stove (pellets difficult to keep dry and difficult to start), to a portable (collapsible or non-collapsible) Sims stove.

Wildlife issues at back country cabins: porcupines keep chewing on the outside of the LeConte cabin; put shingles on sides, use mothballs? What does RM suggest?

Establish a list of “Primitively maintained” trails which would include the trail from the Tabbies meadow to the upper Kings crossing, the Taboose Pass Trail and the Sawmill Pass trail. These trails would not be “improved”, but the continuing erosion on these trails could be kept at bay with periodic maintenance.

Can we export to the USFS the checklist on the back of our permits?

Have a plan to deal with “when a bear goes bad” in an area that otherwise is free of conditioned bears. Drop a bear box at that site for temporary use?

WHERE ARE WE GOING IN 1996?:

Now that the Sierra Crest position is filled, after a vacancy of two years, the first priority is to familiarize with the back country areas, ranger stations, and personnel.

The 1996 work plan includes the following:

Continue park boundary marking project.

Meet with the commercial pack stations in spring to discuss 1996 operations (HSPA).

Coordinate and conduct 32 hours refresher for wilderness rangers.

Coordinate and track Back country service projects in Kings Canyon.

Improve property management system and accountability for the Cedar Grove BC cache.

Continue to monitor wilderness conditions. Recommend management actions for areas where standards have been exceeded.

Monitor the effects of food storage boxes, hitch rails, outhouses, snow survey sites, and drift

fences in wilderness.