

Rock Creek, Season End Report

Summer 1997,

Dario Malengo, Ranger

In the Rock Ck. patrol area I contacted 905 visitors. Most visitors were overnight backpackers. Some visitors were stock supported, with spot trips to Upper Rock Ck being the most popular. The "all expense" trips have lessened in numbers. Overnight grazing has decreased because of this.

Most people in this area are either going to Mt. Whitney or to Upper Rock Ck and back out. Few dayhikers use this area, occasionally people will do the Cottonwood and Army pass loop as a dayhike, about 21 miles

Cottonwood pack station had one traveling trip with twenty head that camped at Rock Ck. Lake and moved on to Crabtree. The NPS administrative trip with the military stayed 1 night at Nathan's and one night at Rock Ck. Lake (stringer mda) The trail crew used the meadows below the lower crossing for seven nights. Bill Wymen with 9 burros stayed one night in Upper Rock Ck. Also 1 group of llamas passed through.

There were no citations given in the Rock Ck. area. A few verbal warnings were sufficient for compliance. Occasionally an illegal fire will pop up at Soldier Lk, but I was never able to come across anyone in the act.

One minor medical occurred at Lower Rock Ck. and a horse evacuation was initiated.

The only SAR was the Mt. Tyndall SAR which had a happy ending when the patient was airlifted by the military. This SAR showed good teamwork by NPS, China LK and the military.

The snow pack was gone when I arrived on June 26th. This season started early and there were many people in the mts. when I arrived. My suggestion is to either start training earlier or shorten training so we can be out there when the hiking season begins.

The weather was more rainy than most years but with sunny California weather predominating.

The use patterns were about the same as in the past. The management of the numbers going to Mt. Whitney seem to be working out. Rob at Crabtree agrees that the numbers and use patterns haven't changed in recent years.

This year spot trips provided most of the commercial/stock use. Private use was very little. The greatest number of stock nights came from the NPS staff/military trip.

Nathans Meadow showed a lot of impact

from the few large groups that used this meadow. Also the Rock Ck. Lake stringer meadow, from only two or three large groups using this meadow (Cottonwoods traveling trip and Nps military/staff) showed heavy impacts. **This** should be looked at by our meadow research person. As in years past, because of the wetness of ~~at~~ these stringer meadows, severe mechanical impacts are more than what should be allowed. I suggest closing these meadows to ~~closing~~ grazing (stringers). The broken sod, holes and uneven ground, which are obviously caused from grazing, should not be allowed.

The biggest problem in this area are the military Jet overflights. The noise that military jets make out here are unacceptable in this wilderness. The park needs to push harder to end this. The situation is out of control and has been for my twenty three years in this park. The Nps is not providing for the "enjoyment of present and future generations" by ignoring the Jet issue. This should be pushed up through the chain of command to Washington. The present administration is facilitating the military by going along with the present reporting system. We need to make a stand on the Jet noise and ~~have~~ not done so. When the jets are lower than 3000' or if they are 10,000' AGL, it makes no difference, it is too loud!

To Repeat one backpackers words: Sequoia and Kings Cyn. National park south of Keywargz pass no longer sustains a wilderness experience, due to the presence of Low Flying Military Aircraft¹⁾

The only commercial outfitters besides the pickers were two A-16 trips and one Rainbow expedition trip.

No hunting was observed in this area. I patrolled the Siberian Outpost for this. My belief is that if any poaching is done in this area it is done after we leave in mid October

There were eight cattle for about 5-7 days on the Siberian Outpost. They came in the low pass from Rocky Basin Lakes and exited out Siberian Pass. They probably belonged to the Cabin Bar Ranch. I think we need to put more pressure on the Forest Service to keep those cattle away from the park. I still do not believe a fence is necessary due to the environmental impacts on the land and wildlife.

The sensitive plant populations seem to be doing well. Most meadows received less impact than in the past (except Nathans + Rock CK LK stringers).

Archeological sites were not altered and the nearly historical Ranger Station is in fine repair.

The one drift fence in the Rock CK area needs maintenance by the trail crew,

it is too rag-tag on the upper end.

This years trail crew/ranger project was the much needed re-route above Guitar Lk.

The Nathan's Mdn. crossing was improved by the trail crew which should keep hikers from making a trail across the Mdn.

The next project for trail improvement should be the 'chute' above Rock Ck Lk.

All camp areas are doing well except the area at Soldier Lk. This can be improved by moving the bear box to either the camps apx 250 yds So. or maybe better moving the box apx .7 miles to the Army Ck. trail Junction.

All firerings are clean and of above profile.

There were not any bear incidences because the bear boxes have done there job. Now people can camp wherever they please and hang there food and not be bothered by the bear. Even the removal of some of the boxes is possible because of the success of the boxes, but I don't recommend this due to ^{the} little impact caused + the great benefit received (The soldier Lk. box could ~~be~~ be removed as a test to this).

The upper Bubbs Ck. + Kearsarge area East of Kearsarge pass still needs someone up there to recognize that the only way they can solve the problem is by adding 1 box higher upon Bubbs Ck. and 2 large boxes on F.S. land east of Kearsarge Pass.

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The permit system seems to be working well in this area and use patterns are about the same -

Station needs:

- 2 flashlights
- ~~+~~
- on hand - 2 full propane

