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McClure Meadow Ranger
(Dave Gordon)
2001 End-Season Report

VISITOR CONTACTS AND BACKCOUNTRY PATROLS

	<u>Visitor Contacts</u>	<u>Miles Patrolled</u>
June (7 days) -	35	41
July -	308	188
August -	572	175
September -	214	154
Totals -	1,129	558 (about 1/3 cross-country)

After another relatively dry winter and an unusually dry spring, the backcountry opened early with very little snow on passes in late June. Most of the PCTers who are normally seen in the early summer, had already hiked through before I arrived. JMT hikers comprised the bulk of contacts at about 60%, mostly hiking north to south. The remainder of the contacts consisted of North Lake to/from South Lake trekkers, hikers in and out of Florence Lake, and loops involving Lamarck Col. Lamarck Col seemed to have a significant use increase over previous years, perhaps due to an article last winter in Backpacker Magazine (something like: "10 Secret Sierra Hikes"). Surprisingly, all hikers asked for their permits had them.

Organized groups consisted of nine Boy Scout troops, two church groups, three school groups, and one Sierra Club outing.

STOCK USE/GRAZING

178 stock of all types were seen in the backcountry with 67 stock users. Stock consisted of 130 horses/mules, 27 llamas, and 21 burros. Of the 26 stock groups contacted, 5 were administrative (Luke Painter, 5-5-8), 7 were private and 14 were commercial operators — Bishop Pack Outfitters (2); High Sierra Pack Station (7); Rock Creek Pack Station (2); Lee-Lin Llama Treks (2); Muir Trail Ranch (2). Also two private parties used burros rented from Lost Valley Pack Station.

Most grazing occurred at Evolution Meadow (moderately grazed) which opened per "normal year" schedule on July 1st. McClure and Colby Meadows opened on the new "normal year" of August 1st and experienced light grazing. Darwin Meadow had a stock group graze on August 1st just prior to me taking out the hitchrail (dug up, cut, and chopped for firewood) and placing a notice encouraging using alternate pocket meadows down canyon — afterwards one other group in September kept 2 horses at the meadow for a night. Two or three groups grazed at the Hell-for-Sure Pass junction in Goddard Canyon and did day rides to Martha Lake (many deep hoofprints remain in the boggy meadow one mile below the lake).

In early July, 10 llamas grazed for 3 nights at the east end of Evolution Meadow near a camp next to

the JMT. About ten 100 to 200 sq. ft. patches were closely cropped, smashed, and partially dug up by the animals leaving a very noticeable aesthetic impact — this is due to the nature of how llamas graze: sitting down and not moving. At my request, the outfitter, Lee Stanley, used another site on the south side of the creek near the old ford and away from the main trail for his next outing, and will continue to use this low profile site for future trips.

Manure piles in meadows were routinely scattered throughout the summer to expedite decomposition. This practice also assists in gauging relative stock use and specific grazing locations in a meadow.

LAW ENFORCEMENT INCIDENTS

Two citations were written this summer for dogs in the backcountry (8/6 + 8/9). Verbal/written warnings were given to visitors as follows: tents on vegetation (3); campsites too close to water (2); fire ring enlargement (2); inadequate food storage (9) — either hung too close to trunk or tied off at trunk; trash at camp (1). The citations and warnings were mostly well received and always done with an explanation for the regulation.

MEDICAL INCIDENTS/SARS

It was a very busy summer for medicals, searches and rescues which occurred as follows:

- Week of 6/18 : Lower leg fracture in Ionian Basin; flown out from Goddard Bridge after hiking with ski poles (I did not participate)
- 7/16 & 17 : Body recovery and investigation of Randy Morgenson at Window Peak Lake
- 7/24 : Ankle injury flown out from Darwin Bench (I did not participate)
- 8/16 & 17 : Ankle injury flown out from Darwin Canyon just below Lamarck Col
- 9/3 : Ankle injury flown out from Darwin Canyon near outlet of lower lake
- 9/8 & 9 : Search for missing hiker/climber near Aspen Meadow and Pavillion Dome (body was found outside of Park north of Dome)
- 9/14 : Ankle injury flown out from Darwin Canyon between two lowest lakes
- 9/20 & 21 : Search for JMT hiker separated from group with sore ankle. He did not want medical assistance per note at Muir Pass

Four ankle injuries occurred in Darwin Canyon, again perhaps, as a result of increased travel due to a magazine article in Backpacker Magazine. I spoke with the information desk supervisor of the Inyo National Forest, White Mountain Ranger District Visitor Center in Bishop and asked her to have her staff communicate to hikers that Lamarck Col is a serious cross-country pass/route requiring basic mountaineering experience.

SERVICE INCIDENTS

Numerous visitor assistance throughout the summer consisted of cross-country route advice; camping locations; good fishing sites; trail (snow) conditions; weather forecasts; supplying food (many times); supplying insect repellent, sunblock, rope for hanging food (3). Several radio calls were made to Dispatch or 735S requesting a phone call to a visitor's friend or relative for a delay and/or change in pick-up location. Two stock users (llamas & horses) lost their animals and I was able to assist in retrieval. Two hiker groups (other than formal searches listed in previous section) became separated and I helped to reunite with trail notes and messages via other hikers. A three pound, \$2000 Nikon camera and lens, belonging to a Sierra Club leader, were retrieved from Finger Peak Basin — it will be sent to him in early October.

RANGER STATION

The stove pipe cap that had been damaged during the 1999/2000 winter was replaced in early July. The two metal door latches and wood latch were replaced after damage from a break-in last winter. Only four mice (3 in attic and 1 in main cabin) were trapped this summer — v.s. 20 last summer and 60-70 during the summer of 1999. (See Recommendation #6 at end of report for cabin reconstruction suggestions).

WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS

One bear was seen at the Ranger Station in mid-July. No pine martens or weasels were observed this summer. Only a couple of chickarees were seen which is significantly less than normal.

TRASH REMOVAL

Approximately 100 pounds of trash was collected in the backcountry, hiked to the Ranger Station, and packed out by Park and commercial packers. Trash consisted of cans, glass, campfire foil, several shoes/sandals, and abandoned clothing. More partially buried toilet paper was collected and burned than previous summers.

MEADOW MONITERING

Two meadows were monitered for residual biomass in mid-September: Colby and Evolution Meadows. Colby

had only a "reference plot" taken, as the meadow was uniformly, lightly grazed. Evolution Meadow was monitored using the same moderately grazed "core plot" and ungrazed "reference plot" as previous years. Darwin Meadow was watched for signs of use, and due to the posted notice and removal of the hitchrail received little use (5-8 stock nights v.s. about 40 stock nights during ^{each of} the previous two summers).

TRAILS

Trailcrew came in shortly after my arrival and cleared only a few fallen trees in Goddard Canyon on the Hell-for-Sure Pass trail (I assisted). No trees had fallen on the JMT from Piute Creek Bridge to Evolution Lake (very unusual). Another crew was based at Sapphire Lake in early August for a couple of weeks — they mainly did trail maintenance, and revegetation of old, closed trails.

As last summer, I erected a large rock cairn at Lamarck Col such that it is highly visible from the basin to the northeast. It appears from asking hikers who had come over the Col that most are seeing the cairn and passing over the correct notch (left of 3 notches from NE).

Throughout the summer on patrols, trails were cleared of "stumbler" rocks, pine cones, branches and horse/mule manure — the most commended thing I do.

DRIFT FENCES

Little work was required on the three drift fences and gates other than tightening wire and replacing fence nails. The fences are in relatively good condition and should not need more than routine maintenance in the near future.

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

The "Evolution" repeater worked flawlessly this summer — first in years. 7355 "Round-up" contacts were consistently on time and provided excellent support for miscellaneous communications. The MT-1000 radio with telescopic antenna works well from most locations in the McClure patrol area (few dead spots around Martha Lake). The radio was mostly powered with rechargeable batteries charged with the new inverter/charger combination saving disposable batteries for searches.

BEAR INCIDENTS

A significant increase in bear activity/incidents occurred this summer. One or two bears in Evolution Valley got several groups' food out of trees in July and early August (a notice was placed at the camp nearest to the ranger station and on the cabin door, which helped to reduce incidents at McClure). Three to five different bears were observed and reported along the South Fork of the San Joaquin River — these bears obtained food out of trees about a dozen times (as reported).

Most of the problem hangings were too close to the trunk of the tree. A couple of reports were due to bear(s) getting empty food containers not hung or placed in bear-proof canisters.

Although about two thirds of hikers are now carrying bear-proof canisters, the other third who hang can rarely do so adequately due to lack of information, experience or (mostly) finding a proper branch. Even food hung high enough and far enough away from the trunk is sometimes obtained by a bear breaking or chewing through the branch.

On two separate patrols (4 nights total), I hung food at camps along the South Fork of the San Joaquin River that had been hit by bears (claw marks on trees), and had sling shot and bear pepper spray at hand to harass with — but, of course, no bears were seen or heard by me on these nights.

LOW FLYING AIRCRAFT

On June 25th, the day I arrived at McClure, a low flying military jet was seen from Evolution Lake. It appeared to be a grey F-16 flying east to west between 500 and 1,000 ft. AGL over the lake. This is the only low flying jet I've seen in the McClure patrol area in three summers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Require commercial pack stations to provide regulations with permits (twice, groups that had been issued permits from a commercial packer, did not obtain any regulations — verbal or written) — perhaps require the pack station to go over and have client initial several key regulations as both the Park and USFS do.
- 2) In lieu of closing Martha Lake to stock travel (as suggested in my last two EOS reports), set an opening date for travel in August (either 1st or 15th) after the boggy meadow, one mile below Martha Lake, has a chance to dry out — many new deep (6"-8") hoof prints occurred this summer as a result of day rides to and from the lake.
- 3) Schedule mobilization flight a couple of days after the Ranger is to arrive at the Ranger Station to allow for packing and flying out miscellaneous materials (sheet metal, screen, paint cans, buckets, etc.) that are stored in the attic.
- 4) Trailcrew might want to build an addition to the upper Evolution Valley drift fence, above the rocky, cliff section, in order to prevent animals from going up and around the fence — this happened twice last summer that I know about (ask Luke 5-5-8 about his hiking hours to retrieve stock).

5) Llama groups need to move their llamas frequently to prevent a mowed appearance to the meadow. I suggest a limit of ten animals per group. In the spirit of "Leave No Trace", llama groups should be encouraged to graze their animals away from main trails and camps. In Evolution Valley; Colby, McClure and Evolution Meadows all have camps on the south side of the creek that could be used.

6) Ranger Station reconstruction suggestions:

- (a) open ceiling (partial loft) in front of cabin with roof insulated - ceiling at back $\frac{1}{2}$ of cabin
- (b) clear story window high in front to provide light (removable window could be placed in attic door)
- (c) larger or additional window on west side
- (d) wood storage area next to stove
- (e) cold storage access through floor
- (f) food storage cabinets on west wall (kitchen area)
- (g) outside shower stall (side walls for privacy)

7) Purchase "Bearikade" food canisters for each station; also recommended would be a copy of R.J. Secor's The High Sierra; Peaks, Passes & Trails - 1999 edition

8) As suggested by several hikers, horses/mules should be required to be harnessed with manure collection bags. On multiple day pack trips, additional mules would be designated to pack out the... just kidding!

McClure Meadow Ranger Station

Equipment/Supply Needs for Summer 2002

(see also "Consumables Inventory")

- (6) or so disposable MT-1000 batteries
- (6) or case "D" size alkaline batteries (for 2 cell flashlight)
- (10) burlap sacks
- (6) boxes "d-Con" mouse pesticide (will use all remaining over winter)
- (1) Katadyn Water Filter washer/nut kit (previously requested)
- (2) 10 ft redwood 2x4s - straight with no large knots
(to rebuild ladder - have 11 pine rung boards at R.S.)
- (2) pkgs paper towels
- (1) gal all-purpose cleaner (like "Simple Green")
- (2) pkgs 8 1/2 x 11" lined white paper (like this one)

McClore Meadow Ranger Station
Consumables Inventory - EOS 2001

- (19) gal propane (1 full 10 gal tank, 1 partially full 10 gal tank, 1 full 5 gal tank)
- (2) gal white gas (Coleman Fuel)
- (1) gal reg- unleaded gas
- (1/2) gal saw gas (mixed)
- (2) qts bar oil
- (7) (16:1) 2 stroke engine oil (makes 7 gal fuel)
- (16) "Turner Tornado" propane canisters (for propane lanterns)
- (1) gal window cleaner
- (1) qt. liquid laundry detergent
- (1) qt. dish washing soap
- * - (4) new disposable MT-1000 batteries
- (10) used batteries (marked either 14 or 13V)
- (6) rechargeable MT-1000 batteries - (fully charged)
- (7) cases (24 ea) AA batteries
- (3) boxes wood matches
- (1) case large latex gloves
- (6) ace bandages
- (3) SAM splints
- nearly full shampoo & conditioner bottles
- nearly full moisturizing lotion
- (1) roll duct tape, (1) roll elect. tape, (3) rolls packing tape
- (10) rolls T.P
- (1) "D" & (1) Jumbo "D" O₂ tanks
- (1) qt chlorine bleach
- plenty of all sizes of plastic trash bags
- * - (2) burlap sacks
- * - (1) pkg paper towels

* need more for 2002 (see Station Needs List)

2001

SEQUOIA and KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

STOCK USE OBSERVATIONS FOR THE McClure Meadow

RANGER STATION/TRAILHEAD

DATE	WHERE OBSERVED	Camp/ Trail	DESTINATION (Area to be grazed) <i>Please include forage area number</i>	# of Nights	# of Stock	# of People	C P A*	NAME and ADDRESS (**See Below**)
7/4	Evolution Meadow	Ev. Mdw	Evolution Mdw	3	10 llamas	8	C	Lee Stanler Lee Lin Llama Trek
7/10	Piute Creek Bridge	None	Piute Creek (day ride, no grazing)	0	8	5	C	Allen H.S.P.S. (Cunningham)
7/13	Sapphire Lake	JMT @ Darwin Creek	Darwin Creek (has spring, no grazing)	1	2 llamas	1	P	Jeff Gillarde 10239 Ojai Santa Paula Rd, Ojai, CA 93023
7/27	Evolution Mdw	Camp N of Mdw.	Evolution Mdw	2	16 burros	8	P	3 Corner Round - Paul Spraycar 605 Worcester Rd, Towson, MD 21286
8/2	McClure Mdw	McGee Canyon	McGee Canyon	1	2 llamas	4	P	Randy Forstner 7918 Gettysburg, Clovis, CA 93611
8/6	Evolution Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	1	3 llamas	2	P	Warren Kaplan, Wash DC. 2553 Arizona Terrance New 2076
8/6	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	1	6	4	C	Allen H.S.P.S.
8/8	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	1	10	1	A	Luke S-S-B
8/9	Evolution Mdw	Ev. Mdw	Evolution Mdw	3	3 burros	4	P	Robert Campbell (Richard Ross Rental) 226 Van Lente, San Anselmo, CA
8/9	Goddard Bridge	Hell-4-Sure	Hell-for-Sure Junction	1	10	1	C	Allen H.S.P.S.
8/9	Aspen Mdw	Franklin Mdw	Franklin Mdw	1	3	1	C	Ken H.S.P.S.
8/10	Goddard Bridge	None	None (Day Ride)	0	4	1	C	Vincent Muir Trail Ranch
8/10	Aspen Mdw	Hell Sure	None (back to Florence)	0	11	1	C	Allen H.S.P.S.
8/14	Evolution Mdw	←	* Pocket Mdw between Darwin & Colby	1	6	2	C	Josh/Sandy Bishop Pack Outfitters
8/14	Evolution Mdw	South side Ev. Mdw	Evolution Mdw	3	10 llamas	8	C	Lee Stanler Lee Lin Llama Treks
8/15	Evolution Lake	Goddard Bridge Camp	Cony Mdw	2	7	2	A	Luke S-S-B
8/16	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	1	5	1	C	Allen H.S.P.S.
8/22	Aspen Mdw	Caldwell Camp	Cony Mdw	1	8	1	A	Luke S.S.B
8/24	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw (8/22)	1	8	1	C	Allen H.S.P.S.
8/26	McClure Mdw	Ev. Lake	Evolution Lake	1	2 burros	2	P	From Tables P.O. Box 1991 (Richard Ross Rental) Avalon, CA 92024
8/30	Evolution Lake		8/30 Grouse Mdw/McClure Mdw 8/22	1	8	1	A	Luke S-S-B
8/30	Evolution Lake	←	* 8/30 Evolution Mdw 8/22	1	8	1	C	Josh Bishop Pack Outfitters
8/30	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	McClure Mdw	1	3	2	C	Vincent Muir Trail Ranch

