

**Rock Creek Ranger Station**  
**End of Season Report**  
**Erika Jostad**  
**Field Season: June 29 –September 28, 2003**

A. General Observations

Contacts **Hiker: 2028**

**Stock: 317** (13% Private, 20% Administrative—Kern Trail Crew, Chief Ranger/Department of Defense Trip, 57% Commercial—Cottonwood Pack Station, Mammoth Pack Outfit, Rock Creek Pack Station, Sequoia Kings Canyon Pack Station, Bill Wyman)

**Stock use nights: 556**

**Type of stock:** 2 llamas, 24 burros, 218 horses and mules.

Assists Supplied visitors with a water filter, stove fuel, food, facilities to dry out equipment and feminine supplies. Inadvertently provided garbage and equipment storage service to several parties who used the trash cans at the station while the ranger was patrolling. Avoided a half dozen searches by making calls for overdue hikers via the Wilderness Office and Dispatch.

Medicals I gave out supplies and assisted with treatment of several parties for minor altitude illness, exhaustion, sprained knees, minor cuts, and blisters. I examined one patient suffering from fatigue. After consultation with UMC, the patient was deemed fit to continue his trip.

Rescues and Evacuations Took the initial report and responded to a 73 year old woman who fell crossing Wallace Creek and shattered her ankle. She was ultimately assisted by the Crabtree and Tyndall rangers and evacuated by helicopter to Kaweah Delta Hospital. Responded to a man who fell in the Miter Basin while climbing to Crabtree Pass with a broken clavicle and minor lacerations. Spent the night with the party and evacuated by helicopter to Kaweah Delta Hospital. Responded to a woman in Lower Rock Creek suffering from extreme skin reaction of unknown origin with blistering, hives and ultimately facial swelling. Spent the night with the party and evacuated by helicopter to Kaweah Delta Hospital. Responded to an adolescent girl on the Siberian Outpost suffering from a flu-like illness. Spent the night with the party and evacuated by stock to Horseshoe Meadow.

Searches Conducted a hasty search in Rock Creek to locate a juvenile hiker with Three Corner Round who departed camp without permission. The boy was located by day's end enroute to Horseshoe Meadow and was returned to camp. Avoided a half dozen searches by making calls for overdue hikers via the Wilderness Office and Dispatch.

Law Enforcement The Rock Creek Ranger Station was broken into prior to my arrival at the beginning of July. This year marked the latest arrival of wilderness rangers into the field during the last eleven years, which likely left the cabin vulnerable to this type of trespass and damage. The cabin door had to be replaced which necessitated an additional helicopter flight and my staying at the cabin for the first week of the season to guard the food inside while awaiting a replacement door. The porch was damaged in the break in and had to be rebuilt. Violations addressed in the patrol area included numerous instances of vegetation damage, commercial guiding without an Incidental Business Permit, improper food storage, improper use of government facilities, pets in the backcountry, minimum impact practice in stock camps, appropriate use of food storage lockers, littering, illegal fires. There were numerous instances of visitors bringing their dogs into the park to climb Mt. Langely. I confirmed that the USFS Mount Whitney RS informs visitors that this is acceptable which is flatly erroneous and presents a particular hazard for the Mt. Langely herd of bighorn sheep. This needs to be followed up on (see recommendations). A citation was issued to Cottonwood Pack Station for leaving a site not clean upon departure, the packer successfully rehabilitated the site in Lower Rock Creek after this incident. Again this season I successfully utilized punitive work projects for minor violations in lieu of citations with good success in furthering the educational function of law enforcement contacts.

As I departed the area at the end of September I encountered three parties hunting along the southern park boundary. Additionally, for the second year in a row I have heard second hand reports that the Cottonwood Pack Station facilitates poaching of deer in the Rock Creek area after the ranger closes the station for the season. I was unable to follow up on this.

Fires The West Kern fire burned west of the patrol area from August continuing beyond my departure at the end of September. Depending upon wind and burn intensity the fire filled the Rock Creek drainage with smoke and rained down ash. On those days I spent significant time with anxious visitors discussion prescribed fire use and trail closures.

Weather It was a warm summer with consistent thunderstorm activity through July and August. The snow pack was on the low end of normal and had melted in the drainage by early May according to early season visitors.

Staffing Staffing of field ranger stations began at the beginning of July extending only to the end of September. Impacts occurred prior to my arrival including the break-in to the cabin and trespass grazing. In the autumn I was unable to monitor hunting activity and stock use. Other impact associated with the short field season are noted throughout this report. See recommendations.

## B. Use Patterns

Hiker Foot traffic remains generally consistent with previous years encompassing a mix of traffic utilizing New Army and Cottonwood Passes, roughly half bound for Crabtree and Mt. Whitney and the remainder visiting Upper Rock Creek and the Miter Basin as a destination. There is a notable exception to established patterns. There is an increase in the number of hikers bound for Mt. Whitney who enter and exit via Rock Creek because they are unable to obtain the requisite Mt. Whitney exit permit instituted by the Inyo National Forest last season. This shift in usage of the Rock Creek and Crabtree areas was noted last year and increased this year as the Inyo NF began enforcement of the exit permit. The exit permit may allow fewer hikers on the Mt. Whitney Trail on the east side of the peak but it increases the amount of time hikers spend in Rock Creek and Crabtree with associated impacts. In addition I observed more caching of equipment and food both in lockers and canister stored at lockers and the Ranger Station by hikers entering and exiting a climb up Mt. Whitney via Rock Creek. Parties continue to attempt to circumvent the exit quota by using the Miter Basin as a base camp and climbing Mt. Whitney via Crabtree Pass and Discovery Pinnacle. This route is described in a guidebook on Mt. Whitney and USFS permit issuers persist in suggesting this route. This creates a distinct hazard for hikers accustomed to trail walking and resulted in one rescue in Rock Creek and numerous disappointed attempts. Additionally, it is counterproductive for permit issuers to recommend routes that will undermine the new exit quota.

I continued to note significant use on Mt. Langley this season including encountering commercially guided parties. Second to the trail up Mt. Whitney, Mt. Langley is the most easily accessible 14,000' peak in California and home to a small herd of bighorn sheep, which were observed this season. The routes via New and Old Army Passes are roughly nine miles one way from the trailhead at Horseshoe Meadow. The route is mostly by trail and class one cross-country walking. The effect of the heavy use is evident in dozens of trails that braid the south and southwest slopes of the mountain and attendant significant erosion. There is a use trail that connects Upper Solider Lake to the Mt. Langley ridge in better condition than the maintained New Army Pass trail. There is a similar trail connecting the Army Passes with Mt. Langley. These trails braid out across the southern slopes of the mountain. I propose a more active management role may be appropriate to adequately protect the resource here. First, determine what impact the high use may have on breeding sheep. Second, address the myriad of trails and erosion by channeling visitors onto a single marked route such as was successfully done on the east side of Sawtooth Pass in 2001. Third, rehabilitate

the numerous areas damaged by erosion. The second and third items could be carried out by a Restoration Crew, see recommendations.

Stock Stock use patterns were similar to previous years with significant private use in Lower Rock Creek. Private parties confirm that the area is desirable due to the USFS public equestrian camp at Horseshoe Meadow. (As an aside I received reports of the manure bins at the camp overflowing in midsummer and the USFS confirmed they no longer enforce their one night limit at the camp. This meant equestrian visitors would arrive at the camp midweek and have to camp in the parking lot because stock parties would occupy the campground for a week at a time). I received significant positive input from private and commercial users as well as the plant ecologist regarding the proposed demonstration stock camp in Lower Rock Creek that should be operational for the 2004 season. See appendix A.

Administrative Administrative use in Rock Creek included an eight night stay of the Kern trail maintenance crew in Lower Rock Creek, a two week stay of the Small Mammal Crew on the Siberian Outpost prior to my arrival, a three week stay of the Carnivore Crew at Rock Creek Lake, a one week stay of the Archaeology Crew working on the Siberian Outpost, a one week stay of the plant ecologist for species composition plot reading in Lower Rock Creek, a one week stay of the vegetation mapping crew and the annual Chief Ranger/Department of Defense trip. Also an early season visit by the Kern Sub district Ranger and a midsummer visit by the District Ranger with USFS personnel to discuss management of the Pacific Crest Trail. It was a delight to view the area through these varied perspectives. One element we need to address with administrative users is the need to leave primary campsites and food storage lockers available for public use. See recommendations.

Aircraft Military aircraft continue to feature prominently in the wilderness experience of Sequoia-Kings Canyon. Actual "low flying" aircraft (below 3000' AGL or 18,000' MSL) were common this season compared with the previous five years. In 2002 only 12 low flying aircraft reports were logged with fire dispatch for the entire season. At the height of aircraft activity in 2003 there were 12 reports logged per week. Rangers did not receive feedback during the field season this year regarding the accuracy of reporting though it appears we need to redouble our efforts. I also logged a dozen complaints from visitors regarding over flights and the impact on visitor experience.

Commercial Users The primary commercial users of the Rock Creek area are the pack stations that operate under incidental business permits (IBP). The Cottonwood Pack Station is in the area several times each week sometimes daily. The pack station issues wilderness permits directly to clients and does not always provide accurate information, particularly concerning appropriate food storage. This problem has been ongoing over many years. It was again addressed this year in the field. After several stock supported parties were visited in camp by bears in

Rock Creek (reports largely second hand) the pack station began sending all parties into the wilderness with food storage barrels. Problems were addressed again with CPS feeding stock directly on the ground leaving feed behind which attracts other animals into camp. Specific incidents were documented for the NPS concession office and a citation was issued. The Cottonwood Pack Station has been largely responsive to concerns raised in the field. However, the same issues persist from year to year and we begin each season at ground zero. I recommend meeting with Dennis Winchester, area rangers and sub district rangers at the beginning of the 2004 season to discuss expectations. Also, the Cottonwood Pack Station should no longer be given the privilege of issuing permits for the USFS because they have shown they are unwilling to provide accurate food storage information to clients that jeopardizes visitors and wildlife.

In 2002 several IBP pack stations that use the northern parts of Sequoia-Kings Canyon and the Inyo National Forest were under court order this season limiting their amount of stock use nights in the area. When the Rock Creek Pack Station met this limit in early autumn they began bringing stock south and beginning trips into Rock Creek and Crabtree via Cottonwood Pass in the Golden Trout Wilderness, areas not covered by the court order. This meant heavier than previous late season use in the Rock Creek drainage and will need to be monitored. Because the field season ended in late September I was unable to monitor this trend.

Other frequent IBP users include REI, Sierra Mountain Guides, Three Corner Round and Exodus Tours. All run regular trips during the summer bound for Mt. Whitney and Mt. Langley. REI has altered a bimonthly High Sierra Trail trip to exit via Rock Creek because they are unable to consistently obtain a Mt. Whitney exit permit and have become regular visitors in the area. Sierra Mountain Guides takes regular trips to the summit of Mt. Langley and was contacted this summer with dogs in their party. They have received inaccurate information from the USFS regarding the permissibility of this. This was documented for the NPS concession office and a letter sent from the sub district ranger to the guide service to clarify the issue. Three Corner Round spent eight nights in Rock Creek at the beginning of the season. Because of unorthodox stock handling procedures (they count animals daily rather than catching them) they overstayed the two-night limit in a meadow in Upper Rock Creek and stayed longer in the drainage than they planned because they were unable to catch their stock when the time came. Three Corner Round also grazed a meadow two weeks before the opening date (I was unable to address this in a timely manner because the group was already in the field when I arrived to staff the Rock Creek Ranger Station for the season), because they planned their trip using a "Projected Opening Date" bulletin which differed from the actual opening date. This is difficult for visitors to keep track of. See recommendations.

Finally, a women's leadership seminar utilized Rock Creek this season and was stock supported by CPS. The group stayed at the Rock Creek RS while I was away on a rescue and terraced tent pads next to the cabin, used all firewood stacked outside, used the propane stove on the porch, left garbage in the trash cans, used menstrual pads and toothpaste in the outhouse and cached unwanted gear underneath the cabin. The group leader, Marjorie Borjan-Miller, left a note regarding some of this. It is unclear if this group is operating commercially. Because CPS issued their wilderness permit, follow up has been delayed until the pack station submits a permit with contact address.

### C. Natural Resources

Wildlife A bear(s) obtained human food hung in trees or inadequately protected by stock supported trips briefly in late July in the Rock Creek drainage. Educational efforts were redoubled and Cottonwood Pack Station was requested to supply all parties with storage barrels and human-bear encounters seemed to move over New Army Pass into the Cottonwood Lakes Basin. There were several bear sightings in Rock Creek in September but no reported attempts to obtain human food. The food storage box at Solider Lake was repaired twice when clasps were broken.

A visitor observed bighorn sheep (seven rams, two with full curl horns) in the Mt. Langley area at Iridescent Lake in late September. He watched the animals for approximately one hour and one ram approached to within 100 meters.

The carnivore crew detected the presence of weasel, marten and spotted skunk in the drainage. I also observed a marten at 12,000' above Sky Blue Lake. There were frequent weasel sightings including several observations of weasel families traveling in groups up to eight in number. A credible wolverine sighting came from a visitor to the Miter Basin in mid-June where an adult and young were observed for approximately ninety minutes while hunting.

Vegetation Species composition plots were read in Lower Rock Creek at the Rock Creek Ranger Station Meadow and Lower Rock Creek Crossing Meadow. Residual biomass monitoring was conducted at Rock Creek Lake and stringer meadows, Nathan's meadow, Rock Creek Ranger Station meadow and Lower Rock Creek crossing. Exotic plant monitoring found populations of dandelion throughout lower Rock Creek.

An exceedingly large juniperus occidentalis was measured on the south slope of Mt. Guyot. It was a contender for the world's largest specimen but is only slightly overshadowed by an individual in the Stanislaus National Forest. Plans for an interpretive trail have been put on hold.

I worked for one pay period for the plant ecologist conducting vegetation mapping in the Rock Creek and Crabtree Creek drainages. More populations of limber pine were found on the north and south facing slopes of Rock Creek as well as populations of white bark pine on south facing slopes at tree line.

#### D. Cultural Resources

Archaeological Sites I visited archaeological sites on the Boreal Plateau, Siberian Outpost, along Rock Creek, Tyndall Creek, and Chagoopa Plateau. All sites appear unmolested and matching description in archaeological resources reports. The park archaeologist conducted a weeklong survey of the Siberian Outpost with one dozen assistants to mark known sites with a GPS, discover new sites and collect intact points/artifacts. I worked one day with the archaeology crew. I continue to have concerns about the necessity of collecting all intact artifacts found in a place such as the Siberian Outpost where there is no demonstrable jeopardy to these resources remaining in the field where they remain available to researchers and visitors alike. I am unaware of artifacts subsequently being returned to these high elevation, wilderness sites. Archaeological research is beyond my area of expertise yet I question how many artifacts need be removed from the field for analysis and why they are not returned once that analysis is completed.

Historic Structures Rock Creek Ranger Station (54 years old) was broken into prior to the arrival of the field ranger for the season (see Law Enforcement section). The door and porch had to be replaced. The porch is now in usable condition after repairs were made but will need to be rebuilt. Cedar shingles from the roof were blown off last winter and were replaced with new shingles of which there is an adequate supply in the attic. The park archaeologist visited the cabin and took digital pictures. The insulation in the attic was tested for the presence of asbestos and found to contain only glass wool.

#### E. Backcountry Facilities

Patrol Cabin See Historic Structures. The outhouse is in good condition. The solar electric charge controller was replaced after the original controller ceased functioning.

Drift Fence The drift fence in Rock Creek was determined valuable by our plant ecologist in protecting Rock Creek Meadow #2 from which significant species composition data is gathered. The fence was entirely rebuilt by the Kern Trail Crew this season. Most of the 600' long fence was rebuilt using T-posts as a temporary measure due to time constraints with the intention of converting the fence to an all-wood structure in the coming year. The fence is now functional as the crew did excellent work.

Signs The signs in the patrol area are in good condition. Signs will also figure as important features of a demonstration stock camp in Lower Rock Creek (see Demonstration Stock Camp Proposal, appendix A). I would like to get one of the wooden signs for the ranger station which have been made from sequoia wood for most of the other stations in the past couple years. The station itself is currently unsigned.

#### F. Trails

Trail Crew activities and work accomplished The Kern Trail Crew came to Rock Creek in August for eight days. They came in early August rather than late September. They conducted regular maintenance, cleaning water bars and bucking the few trees that had come down in the winter that I was unable to saw myself. They cut wood rounds for the ranger station. The majority of their time was spent rebuilding the drift fence (see Drift Fence section). The Kern crew left clean camps at Lower Rock Creek and on the Chief Ranger/Department of Defense trip.

The Kern Trail Crew has requested to place a Knack box in the camp they use in Lower Rock Creek. They currently use bear proof panniers but would like more storage. The camp they use is the logical overflow camp for the demonstration stock camp when two stock parties are the area at the simultaneously. I am not opposed to the use of a Knack box in this camp on the condition that it remains open for public use and is removed if the crew no longer uses the site as their primary camp in the drainage. I have received complaints from visitors about the proliferation of Knack type boxes in the wilderness. Visitors object primarily because they find the boxes locked and are unable to use them for food storage.

Problem Areas The steepest grades in the patrol area are the top half of the south side of Guyot Pass and the lower part of New Army Pass. Both suffered from significant erosion due to extended heavy summer rains and are impacted from stock use (Guyot Pass far more so). This stretch of trail is a perpetual source of visitor comment as it is incongruous with the rest of the Pacific Crest Trail through the park. It is in need of a reroute/addition of switchbacks. The Trail Construction Crew evaluated this trail and laid out a potential reroute that addresses these issues. In order of priority for work needed:

- 1—Guyot Pass
- 2—New Army Pass
- 3—"Unmaintained" trail to Pinned Up Meadow
- 4—"Unmaintained" trail to stock camp at Rock Creek Lake

We need to address #3. This is not classified as a maintained trail and to my knowledge was never formally constructed. However, this trail is used frequently and is significantly eroded. With each new fallen tree a new path is created and passing pack boxes repeatedly damages trailside trees.



## G. Camp Areas

Conditions Camps with food storage lockers remain the most heavily used and impacted in the area. These areas are frequently maintained yet the number of visitors drawn to the lockers creates noted impacts. Stock camps in Lower Rock Creek saw significant impact as well which is discussed elsewhere in this report. I continued site restoration work on camps in lower Rock Creek. This involved flush cutting stumps in the camps, obliterating and defining social trails and naturalizing heavily impacted soil.

Sanitation Sanitation is a problem primarily at Lower Solider Lake due to the nature of the site and high use of the lake. I refined the signing here to diffuse camping in the vicinity that was effective particularly in reducing the number of illegal campfires.

Fire rings New signing at Lower Solider Lake helped alleviate illegal campfires. Small three and four sided fire pits are maintain at nearly two dozen camps in the Rock Creek drainage in all areas where fires are permitted. These pits persist in being used to burn and leave behind trash by visitors who would not otherwise think of leaving their garbage in the backcountry. In accord with new fire regulations I worked with the Crabtree Ranger to remove all pits in the vicinity of the Ranger Station. The new regulation seems to have one unintended consequence of diverting all stock use to Upper Crabtree Meadow (where fire are permitted) instead of spreading stock use between Upper and Lower Crabtree Meadows. This will need to be monitored.

Firewood availability Down wood remains scarce in high use camps particularly in the upper part of the Rock Creek drainage such as at Pened Up Meadow.

Food Storage The broken clasps on the food storage locker at Lower Solider Lake were replaced twice. Garbage was removed from food storage lockers, again left by visitors who would not otherwise consider littering. Food was frequently found cached in food storage lockers and at the Ranger Station by visitors traveling to and from Mt. Whitney via Rock Creek.

## H. Permit System

Trailhead and Issuing Office The Wilderness Office staff was again an excellent source of information and support this season. The Bishop trailhead office was issuing permits which indicated "bear canisters required" where they are not. They were contacted by the Wilderness Office with correct information. The Lone Pine office continues to erroneously advise hikers that they are permitted to climb Mt. Langley with their dogs. Visitors have specifically named INF wilderness supervisor Calder Reid as providing this information. This is not only incorrect but endangers the small surviving population of bighorn sheep living on the slopes of Mt. Langley. This needs to be addressed at the interagency

coordinating meetings. See recommendations. The USFS permit issuers persist in lacking attention to detail where Park regulations are concerned, the continued staffing of NPS rangers along the east side of the sierra is extremely valuable. Lone Pine trailhead ranger Jonah Mathewson was to have served as a liaison with Cottonwood Pack Station. This never materialized and should really be executed at a higher level of responsibility. The wilderness program suffers from not having a stronger presence on the east side of the sierra with commercial users and adjacent land managers.

Regarding the new wilderness camping fee, most visitors to the Rock Creek area reserve permits in advance with the USFS or have permits issued by the Cottonwood Pack Station. Therefore I met very few hikers who were requested to pay the new fee and am unable to judge compliance and general response.

#### I. Inventory

- 4 small propane tanks (need 1 tank for 2004)
- Full supply of medical equipment (BP cuff and stethoscope with hiking gear at Ash Mt).
- Radio battery charger
- 1 liter alcohol fuel
- 8 gallons white gas
- 2 full 4 ounce IsoPro canisters for Pocket Rocket stove
- 2 partial 4 ounce IsoPro canisters for Pocket Rocket stove
- small and large plastic and burlap sacks enough to last 2004 season
- 2 rolls duct tape
- 2 rolls strapping tape
- 4 packages paper towels

#### J. Needs for next season

##### Station

- 2 tubes gray color "mortar caulk"
- Feminine napkins to give to visitors requesting supplies
- 2 twin mattresses for snow survey use
- Mirror (existing mirror was destroyed during cabin break-in)
- Wheelbarrow
- Book Place Names of the Sierra Nevada
- 1 small propane tank

##### Equipment

- Belt buckle for Black Diamond L28 Speed day pack
- Replacement of buckle on lid/convertible fanny pack of green Dana Design terraplane backpack. The buckle is sewn into the lid and will require replacement by the manufacturer. Without this buckle the lid is no longer usable as a fanny pack on multi-day patrols.

## K. Recommendations

- Create a written "Wilderness Management History" on the model of our written meadow history. This document will facilitate managers in understanding site specific history of wilderness issues. Our wilderness management program is of a high caliber in large part because of our vast intimate knowledge of our resource. Much of that is currently maintained in widespread documents and orally. This project could be conducted by a graduate student in wilderness management. (Wilderness Coordinator).
- Issue only one bulletin for meadow opening dates. (Plant Ecologist, Wilderness Office).
- Review criteria for placing Knack boxes and determine if one should be placed in Trail Crew camp in Lower Rock Creek. (Sub district Ranger, Wilderness Coordinator, Trails Program).
- Establish demonstration stock camp in Lower Rock Creek for use by 2004 season (see appendix A) (Subdistrict Ranger, Field Ranger, Trails Program).
- Actively manage use on Mt. Langley including addressing trail/resource issues below and resolve with USFS regarding permissibility of dogs. (Sub district Ranger, Wilderness Coordinator).
- Establish a Restoration Crew which would combine resource and trail building skills to conduct rehabilitation work in the wilderness which is needed but largely not undertaken. This crew could address projects such as restoration on Mt. Langley and the approach trail to the stock camp at Rock Creek Lake where the stream course has been rerouted into the multiple approach trails. (Wilderness Coordinator, Restoration Ecologist, Trails Program).
- Rebuild the upper section of the south side of Guyot Pass. (Trails Program).
- Redouble efforts on military overflights. (Wilderness Coordinator).
- Continue to station NPS trailhead rangers in Lone Pine. (Wilderness Coordinator).
- Staff field ranger stations from early June to mid-October and conduct hunting patrol along the southeast boundary. (Sub district Ranger, Field Ranger, Wilderness Coordinator, Chief Ranger).
- Conduct an early season meeting between pack station owners and rangers to discuss expectations. (Sub district Ranger, Field Ranger).
- Cease to allow Cottonwood Pack Station to issue wilderness permits as they have consistently demonstrated they provide inaccurate information regarding food storage. (Wilderness Coordinator, Sub district Ranger).
- Clarify with administrative users that camps should be in areas lightly used by the public and independent food storage should be available. (Research Office, Wilderness Coordinator, Sub district Ranger).
- Draft a letter to Three Corner Round regarding stock handling practices that will facilitate their protecting the resources. (Sub district Ranger, Field Ranger).

- Lower campfire elevational limit to between 10,000' and 10,400' in the Kern drainage that would encompass current exceptions and set a limit that is not at or above tree line in some instances. (Sub district Ranger, Wilderness Coordinator).
- Address the fall out from the newly instituted "Mt Whitney exit quota" including use of Crabtree Pass/Discovery Pinnacle and the Mountaineers Route and monitor increased use in Rock Creek. (Wilderness Coordinator, Sub district Ranger, Field Ranger).
- Discuss permanent collection of artifacts from wilderness. (Wilderness Coordinator, Sub district Ranger, Archaeologist).

## **Appendix A**

### **Demonstration Stock Camp Proposal**

#### Background

Numbers of stock parties visiting the Rock Creek area were slightly higher in 2002 than in the previous few years. Important differences this season include the concentration of grazing in Lower Rock Creek and the number of private parties using the area for the first time. This trend was observed again in 2003. Private parties utilized seven separate camps this season due to lack of familiarity of the area. Two of the camps are routinely used by stock parties, three are routinely used by backpackers in the vicinity of the food storage locker, two were previously unused. Rarely were there more than two stock parties in the area at once necessitating the existence of seven stock camps. This transpired primarily because stock camps in the area are not designated and first time users were unaware of traditionally used camps. Impacts were significant in some sites with tent pads used as hitch line areas, trees girdled by rope when stock were tied directly to trees for extended periods, seven seeps were trampled to mud 8' across by stock accessing camps via wet areas.

#### Proposal

In discussion with Sylvia Haultain and Catie Karplus during a field visit the idea of establishing a model camp for stock users was proposed. We would set up a demonstration stock camp at Lower Rock Creek Crossing that would be signed and provided with features that would serve as a model for minimum impact stock camping. The camp would be useful for stock users and facilitate wilderness management by demonstrating that features constitute minimum impact camping with stock. A site has been located on the north side of Rock Creek immediately below the Pacific Crest Trail crossing of the creek. It is an established though lightly used site. It is located on the north side of the creek rather than the south where traditional stock camps are located. This places it on the opposite side of the creek from the backpacker camps and food storage locker that is occasionally dominated by stock parties camped in the area. The north side of this meadow complex is thought to be better able to withstand stock use impact. The site is set more than 100' away from the Creek unlike the traditional sites that are 30-50' from water. The site is upstream from a potential overflow site for use when more than one stock party is in the area. This secondary camp is established and can be accessed over durable surface rather than through seeps unlike the traditional sites. The site has a durable flat surface away from camp and water on which to set up a hitch line on, in contrast to all other camps used by stock in lower Rock Creek.

Site features would include:

- A hitch line area that is separated from camp established on durable, unvegetated surface. A cable with fixed tie in points and tree saver straps would be set up so that users would tie between them to hold their animals.
- An established, small size fire pit in the kitchen area.
- A "Knack" type food storage locker that would facilitate proper food storage and information about bear proof panniers.
- Signing in the camp on the top of the food storage locker outlining minimum impact practices while camping with stock.
- Signing to lead visitors to the camp in lower Rock Creek and also at the south Park boundary.
- Signing about the camp at the public stock camp at Horseshoe Meadow Trailhead.
- A large rake provided in camp for removing horse droppings and restoring pawed areas.

### Equipment

- An informational letter about the camp should be sent to pack stations that use the area, the Backcountry Horsemen Association, and the USFS Mt. Whitney Ranger District.
- Anodized aluminum signs reading "Stock Camp" with an arrow. Two signs required one with an arrow pointing right, one with an arrow pointing left.
- One sign to be placed in the camp with information about the camp's features and minimum impact practices.
- Installation of a "Knack" type food storage locker. This type of food storage container is preferable because of its large size which can accommodate the larger food loads carried by most stock parties. Also it is easily removable in the event that this site needs to be removed in the future.
- One fifty foot length of retired 2" fire hose for tree saver straps and a one hundred foot length of cable for hitch line with hardware for fixed anchor points along its length. One small winch for annual set up.
- One large rake.

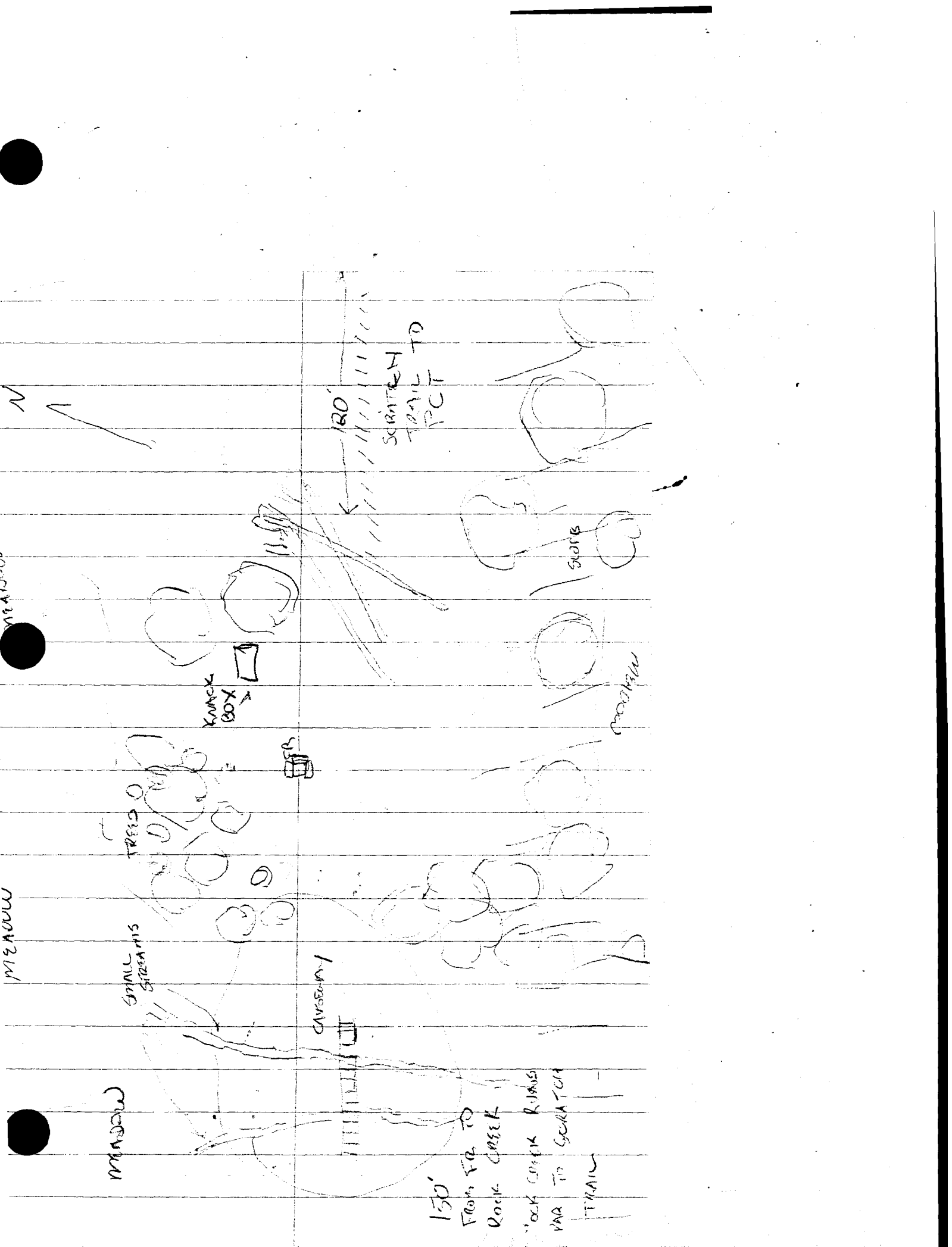
### Work Required

-A causeway to bridge a seep which runs between the camp and hitch line area, approximately 30' total length including approach with 8" clearance over deepest section of seep to be constructed from on site material (rock, wood, sand). The site was evaluated by the Trail Construction Crew in 2003 and the structure deemed appropriate and feasible. The meadows of lower Rock Creek have dozens of small seeps running through them. Many have been damaged by stock accessing camps from the main trail. The camp proposed has only one seep to be crossed rather than seven to access the current primary stock camp. A small amount of mitigation here would prevent resource impact and allow for rehabilitation of previously damaged areas.

--Formalize existing use trail into camp from the Pacific Crest Trail, approximately 100 meters.

--Reconstruct existing fire pit.

--Install signs, Knack box and hitch line.



N

MEADOW

MEADOW

MEADOW

SMALL STREAMS

TREES

KNUCK BOX

CANYON

150'  
FROM FC TO  
ROCK CREEK

ROCK CREEK RUMBLE  
BAR TO SCARATOR  
TRAIL

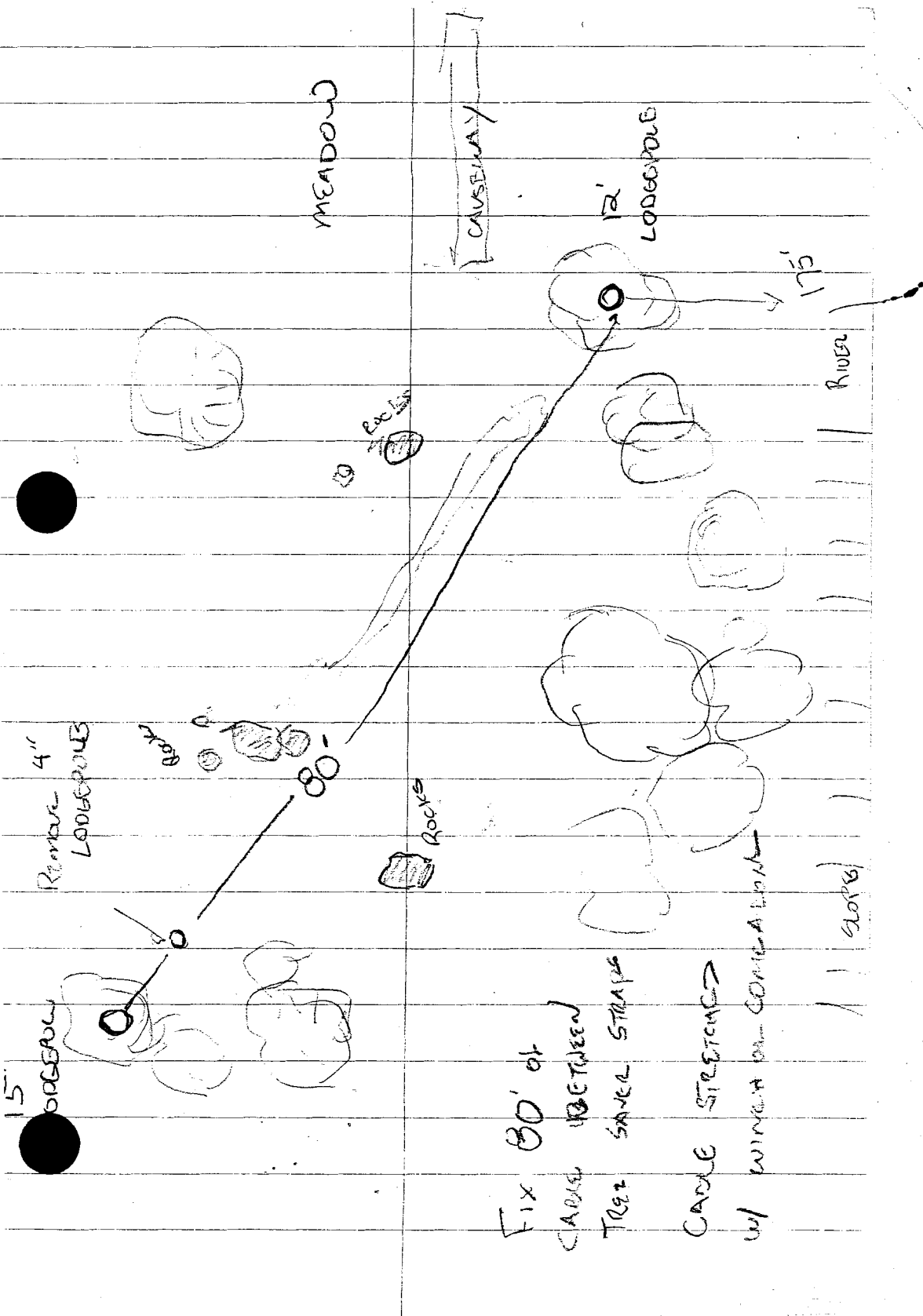
180'

SCENTREH  
TRAIL TO  
PCT

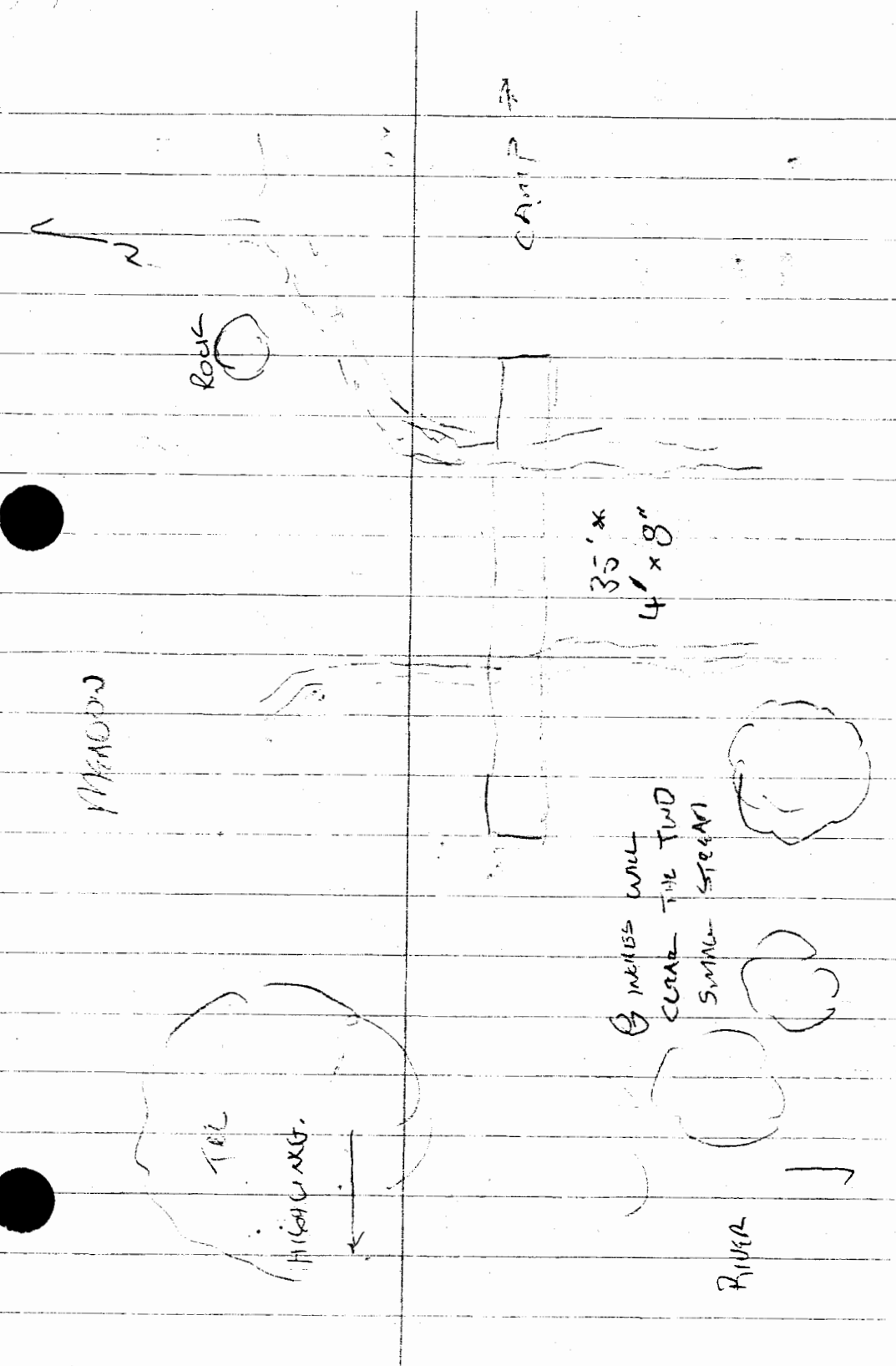
SLOPE

MEADOW





FIX 80' at  
 CABLE BETWEEN  
 TREE SAVE STRAPS  
 CABLE STRETCHES  
 w/ WING IN CONNECTION



ROAD

CAMP

MEADOWS

35' x  
4' x 8'

3 MEN'S WILL  
CLEAR THE TWO  
SWING-STEER

TRAIL  
HIGHWAY

RIVER