

# Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park



## Wilderness Ranger End of Season Report

From: Nina Weisman, Bearpaw Ranger

Through: Chris Waldschmidt, Lodgepole Area Ranger  
Read and approved: /s/ Chris Waldschmidt Date: Oct. 26, 2007

Through: Sequoia District Ranger  
Read and approved: /s/ Gregg Fauth (acting) Date: Nov. 2, 2007

To: Gregg Fauth, Wilderness Coordinator  
Read and approved: /s/ Gregg Fauth Date: Nov. 2, 2007

BEARPAW MEADOW RANGER STATION  
2007 END OF SEASON REPORT  
NINA WEISMAN

This year the Bearpaw Meadow Ranger Station was staffed from June 23 to September 28, 2007.

General Observations:

This year I contacted over 1300 visitors, most of them on overnight backpacking trips but a few were dayhikers and stock users.

Most of the stock use I witnessed was by Horse Corral Pack Station performing their twice weekly resupply trip for the High Sierra Camp. They also resupplied Outward Bound groups near Bearpaw a few times this season. All of these were daytime spot trips and didn't involve grazing or camping. There were a few private groups that also received spot resupplies. The Hockett trail crew again had a few head of stock in Redwood Meadow at the beginning of the season. The upper part of the meadow designated for administrative use was very dry and had minimal forage so the crew got permission to move the stock to the lower, public, section of the meadow.

This year I issued two citations in the backcountry. The first was for an illegal fire in 9 Lakes Basin. The second was for improper food storage at Pinto Lake camping area. I gave out 7 warnings for various issues. (see case cards)

I did two medicals in the backcountry this season. The first was for (b) (6) who was the object of a SAR. J. Ziegler started the medical and I took over when I arrived. We stabilized (b) (6) and flew him out as soon as possible. The second medical was for abrasions suffered by falling into some bushes. In the frontcountry I participated in two medicals that resulted in ambulance transfers.

It was a very dry season. The creek crossings were negligible and there was a concern about the distance between water sources late in the season. In spite of this, the water systems at both Bearpaw and Redwood Meadow had sufficient water all season, probably because the previous two years were so wet.

Use Patterns:

The High Sierra Trail gets the bulk of the traffic in the Bearpaw patrol area. Most of the contacts made on the trail are through hikers to Mt.

Whitney. The loop over Kaweah Gap and Little Five Lakes is also popular. August again brought many Boy Scout troops and a few Sierra Club groups. Outward Bound continues its courses in the area.

Most of the stock use in the area is day use. There are many spot trips and other resupplies that take place around the Bearpaw area. Horse Corral Pack Station resupplied the High Sierra Camp twice a week; Outward Bound about 4 times, brought in gear for guests of the Camp, and had a few private spot trips in the patrol area. I am not aware of any private stock use this season. The Hockett Crew had stock at Redwood Meadow again this season and moved them from the upper to the lower meadow when the meadow got so dry that there wasn't much feed.

I didn't observe any out of bounds aircraft use in the area. There were many aircraft flying high over the area, though. I had no evidence of any hunting activity in the Bearpaw area but I did participate in hunting patrols while working in the Lodgepole area.

### **Natural Resources:**

Wildlife: The Bearpaw area continues to have an abundance of wildlife. There were many bears in the area, the few that wandered into the High Sierra Camp were promptly hazed out and didn't return. I received many reports of bear sightings but no incidents in the patrol area.

The deer population seems to be very healthy. There were many in the area and most of the does had twins that they kept throughout the season. Unfortunately, they don't seem to have enough fear of humans and hang around the camping areas. I don't think they're getting any food, although they did chew up some salty clothing in the campground.

There were again many mountain lion sightings in the patrol area. Some visitors actually saw a lion near 9-Mile creek and soon after saw blood and drag marks on the trail. Other visitors reported seeing lions around the patrol area throughout the season.

Later in the summer, there were raptors everywhere during the migration. I wish I was able to identify more of them but I saw golden eagles, osprey, merlin, Cooper's Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Sharp-Shinned Hawk, Goshawk, many Red-Tailed Hawk's, possible Peregrine sighting near Precipice Lake and many others. The pair of Great Blue Herons that has been hanging around was seen in the Tamarack/Lone Pine Creek drainage.

On the vegetation front the dry year really had an impact. Redwood Meadow was back to a sand pit in the upper reaches, although it seems to recover fully in wet years.



Redwood Meadow 7/9/07

When Outward Bound requested service projects, I again had the groups pull cheat grass and did a talk about invasive species, weeds, seed control, etc. They seem to be very popular service projects.

One thing I observed this year was that the Black Oaks, (*Quercus kelloggii*) had many shriveled leaves. It got very hot when they were leafing out and I think the trees lost a lot of energy when these young leaves dried up and they had to make new ones. I think this might have something to do with the dearth of acorns this season.

### **Cultural Resources:**

There were no new observations of archaeological interest in the patrol area this year. The historic structures all wintered well and are in the same condition as last year. The historic pit toilet at Redwood Mdw. still has a hole in the back but it hasn't grown. This year I couldn't find the old operating diagrams for the Redwood cabin. I photographed them and put them on a cd and the office computer a couple of years ago. I hope the old paper copies turn up in the future.

### **Backcountry Facilities:**

The Bearpaw cabin is holding up quite well and this year got a new water heater. The propane smell that was ever-present the last few years is finally gone! Also, the propane tanks seem to be lasting up to 15 days instead of 10 days, as in past years. Lodgepole maintenance arrived midseason to install it and it has been working perfectly since then. All other facets of the station are in good working condition. The propane refrigerator had to be turned upside down at the beginning of the season



and it worked fine afterwards. (I found out they should be inverted once a year for proper functioning, who knew?)

The Redwood cabin and tack room were well cared for by the Hockett trail crew and are ready for another season.

I created a few new maps on the computer and a few new signs for bear boxes, etc. 6-1-15 did an excellent job of finding thick laminate plastic and sending me back durable signs. The previously ordered 'NO FIRES' sign for Pinto Lake hasn't appeared yet, hopefully it will be ready to go out next season.

### **Trails:**

The Kaweah trail crew again was in the Bearpaw patrol area all season. Tony Fiorino again was crew leader and did an excellent job. We worked together many times on blasts, campground projects and SAR's. They helped fix a bulletin board in the Bearpaw campground and dug a new pit toilet there. They got a lot of trail work done and also helped on a SAR at false Moose Lake, covered many difficult miles, and found the patient. I really appreciate having them in the patrol area and I really felt like we were all one team out there. I hope they all return next season.



The Hockett trail crew was in Redwood Meadow at the beginning of the season and cleared the lower trails and maintained the cabin and outbuildings there. Eric Davenport was the crew leader and hadn't worked this area in many years. He did a lot of work with only a 3-person crew and fixed some long-standing problem spots on the trails in the area. Partway through their stay at Redwood, they asked to move their stock to the lower meadow, as the upper one was very dry. The move was approved and was a good idea. They did a very good job this summer and the area looked very clean when they left.

### **Camp Areas:**

One commonality amongst all the camp areas this year: visitors seemed to be unable to pack out their toilet paper and I found it EVERYWHERE. It was much worse this year than in the past 15 or so years. The trailhead even gave out extra information on properly disposing of toilet paper but it didn't help much. I think a somewhat different demographic visited the backcountry this season.

The Bearpaw campground was quite manageable this season. Most campers cleaned up after themselves and regular cleaning seemed to be sufficient. There is still firewood available that hasn't been burnt yet. One pit toilet was moved and the frame may be rebuilt next year. The bear boxes are all still functional.

The High Sierra Camp again had five employees, still perfectly managed by (b) (6). The crew got along really well this season and were always able and willing to help out whenever possible. They also gave visitors good information and assistance when necessary. Requiring all camp guests to get a wilderness permit has been a great asset in keeping people safe and keeping the wilderness clean. It should continue.

Hamilton Lake continues to get the brunt of westside High Sierra Trail traffic. Hikers from both directions often stay there along with loop hikers and others. Some nights all the campsites are filled and other nights no one is camped there. It is somewhat unpredictable due to the many directions from which hikers approach. I spent many evenings there making sure campers were in appropriate spots and most hikers make an effort to camp where they are supposed to. The pit toilet at Hamilton is still viable although it may have to be redug next year. It gets a lot of use. I installed a new bulletin board this year with a new map and minimum impact info.

It seemed like Tamarack Lake got a little more use than in previous years, but still gets few overnight visitors. The camping areas looked



pretty good after the winter except for some illegal fire residue. I didn't find any illegal fire evidence this summer and most campers left their sites clean. I had to warn one camper who hung their food and tied the rope off to the tree. Luckily, no bears came by before I did.

The camping areas on the High Sierra Trail west of Bearpaw continue to get heavy use. Frequent patrols by myself and the trailhead rangers seemed to keep the area looking good. The few problems were lots of unattended toilet paper and abandoned food in the bear boxes.

Redwood Meadow camping area had some fire issues this year. At the beginning of the season, I found where someone had started a fire in the pit below a root ball and pushed a giant round into the fire. The fire burnt away the roots in the root ball. Luckily there was a faucet nearby to put out the fire.



At the end of September, I discovered another fire incident at the other end of the same camping area. Someone had started a fire inside a Sequoia and the fire had gotten away from them and burnt some bark on the outside of the tree, some more of the inside of the tree, and quite a bit of duff on the ground in front of the tree. Someone had also spent a considerable amount of time carrying water from the faucet to the tree in order to put the fire out.



Other than these two fire incidents, there really was not much else remarkable in the area this year. The meadow was sandy as is usual in dry years; also there was very little stock use.

Cliff Creek and Pinto Lake area are popular stops out of Mineral King. In the past, I don't think visitors hiking out of Mineral King got detailed minimum impact information. This year I was able to have a meeting with 2 new MK trailhead rangers and discuss the issues there. Both areas looked much better than in previous seasons. Pinto Lake especially had fewer fire rings than in the past. There were many ranger patrols down Cliff Creek this year. Both Lodgepole trailhead rangers went through there, the MK trailhead rangers were there, The Little Five Ranger went through there and I patrolled the area. I think that better permit issuing from both trailheads and increased patrols really helped this area. Hopefully the NO FIRES sign for Pinto Lake will appear next year.

### **Permit System**

The Lodgepole trailhead office had 3 employees at the beginning of the season but one of them was unwilling to hike and had no experience. This left the other 2 capable employees to hike but left a very inexperienced employee to give out crucial information to visitors.

This is very unfortunate as the trailhead contact is often the only ranger contact many backpackers receive and thus is extremely important.

Anna Echter was the new supervisor for the trailhead and did an excellent job in her first season. Chad Namolik gets more skilled every year and we were lucky to have him back this season. I was extremely pleased to work with them as they both are very conscientious and communicate with the backcountry rangers frequently. They also were available to help with backcountry projects and any other issues we needed help with. I hope they both return next season.

It is the trailhead ranger's duty to gain firsthand knowledge of the trails and routes that visitors commonly use so that they can give accurate and safe information. This season the trailhead rangers were limited by having to stay in the sub-district on duty and having to stay on trails. These employees need to be able to hike the commonly used trails that depart from their area, even if they lead out of the sub-district. Visitors don't know where those boundaries are and hike all over the place. Also, we have many cross-country routes in the sub-district that hikers frequently use and if we want to give out good and safe info, we need people who have done these routes. I hope these issues are clarified next season because the trailhead staff really needs to acquire this knowledge on duty, in order to better serve the visitor.

#### **Inventory:**

There are 4 large and 1 small full propane tanks at the Bearpaw Ranger Station. There are also 2 empty large tanks. There are 5 sleeping bags, stove and pots, new tarp-tent, fuel canisters, and everything else on previous inventories.

#### **Supplies needed for 2008:**

new water filter (not canister refill)  
new climbing rope for SAR pack  
EMS pack  
C-collar and head pads for litter setup  
Small summit register canisters  
Mt. Clarence King quad  
Kearsarge Peak quad  
3 rolls duct tape  
emergency space blanket  
scale to weigh gear  
size small hipbelt for Osprey pack  
soap for down bags

#### **Equipment:**



1. REFRIGERATOR FOR WUKSACHI FIRE STATION (so our food doesn't rot while waiting for mules)
2. Day patrol pack, under 2 lbs., such as Osprey Atmos 35.
3. Lightweight pitchable tarp.

**Recommendations:**

1. REFRIGERATOR FOR WUKSACHI FIRE STATION (so our food doesn't rot and we don't have to do midnight shopping runs and find ways to freeze water bottles to keep our food intact)
2. Next year we really need 3 full season employees who are experienced hikers and good communicators to staff the wilderness permit desk. (Anna and Chad plus 1 more)
3. Keep hiring hikers for the Mineral King permit desk.
4. Wilderness permits are too expensive and favor large, impactful groups over smaller ones (see previous years' reports). If we only charged \$5 per person, it would be more equitable AND we would take in more money.
5. Extend the shuttle hours and routes so that hikers could use the shuttle to get to and from trailheads. Include wilderness permit info in the shuttles so that hikers know where to get permits and get information.





# CASE CARDS 2007

6/25/07	Bearpaw	warning-food storage	(b) (6)	070815
6/27/07	Bearpaw	minimum impact talk	(b) (6)	070816
7/04/07	Bearpaw	warning-no permit	(b) (6)	070817
7/07/07	Bearpaw	vis assist message	(b) (6)	070818
7/07/07	Bearpaw	vis assist, minor med	(b) (6)	070819
7/09/07	Redwood Mdw.	Fire undesig. Area	Unknown	070821
7/11/07	Hamilton Lk.	Warning-food storage	(b) (6)	070820
7/13/07	Bearpaw	training, res. Mgmt.	(b) (6)	070822
7/17/07	Bearpaw	vis. Assist, min med.	(b) (6)	071089
7/25/07	Bearpaw	vis. Assist, ace band.	(b) (6)	071090
7/26/07	Bearpaw	trailhead training	(b) (6)	071091

7/23/07	HST	calls for missing hiker	(b) (6)	071092
7/26/07	Bearpaw	vis assist, needed food	(b) (6)	071093
7/27/07	Bearpaw	CUP check	(b) (6)	071094
7/28/07	Bearpaw	Vis. Info, campsite	(b) (6)	071095
8/04/07	Hamilton Lk.	Warning, too close to H2O	(b) (6)	071096
8/04/07	Hamilton Lk.	Warning, food storage	(b) (6)	071097
8/02/07	Bearpaw	Outward Bound Serv. Proj	Outward Bound	071098
8/09/07	Bearpaw	minor medical	(b) (6)	071545
8/08/07	Tamarack Lk.	Warning, food storage	(b) (6)	071546
8/14/07	Bearpaw	Min. Med.	(b) (6)	071435
8/15/07	Bearpaw	warning, food storage	(b) (6)	071548
8/16/07	Precipice Lk.	CUP check	Sierra Mtn. Ctr.	071549
8/20/07	Bearpaw	Min. Med. Ace Bandage	(b) (6)	071550
8/25/07	Bearpaw	Visitor Assist	(b) (6)	071551
9/10/07	Gallats Lk.	CUP check	So. Yos. Mtn. Gds.	071552
9/27/07	Redwood Mdw.	Illegal Fire	Unknown	071553

**Sierra Crest: Charlotte Lake  
End of Season Report  
Philip Johnson  
2007**

**A. GENERAL SUMMARY**

It was a quiet season at Charlotte Lake. The Lake saw at most 30 overnight visitors at one time in late July. Backpacker traffic was still heavy on the John Muir Trail. A very dry winter left the trails generally snow free and the creek crossings safe in the early season, but visitation was not noticeably higher. The weather during the season was punctuated with storms and fires, and above average temperatures. Night time low's averaged 45° for most of the season. Highs were in the 80's. The lows were in the teens by late September. There were fires in early July, thunderstorms in mid and late July, smoke from the Santa Barbara fire in mid-August, thunderstorms again in late August through Labor Day, and snow fell on September 20<sup>th</sup>. My wife and VIP, Janet, successfully commuted between Charlotte Lake and Yosemite in order to work a few days each month at the Medical Clinic. We spent most of our lieu days in the backcountry, climbing and enjoying the ranger station. Also operating in the patrol area were the California Conservation Corps crew at Junction Meadow/Charlotte Lake and Daniel Boiano's Frog Crew at Center Basin.

**B. VISITOR SERVICES**

**1. STATISTICS**

	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	TOTAL
Contacts	42	384	449	235	3	1113
Miles	33	285	169	219	62	768
NPS Stock	X	36	36	18	9	99
Other Stock	0	4	22	2	5	33

**Day Hikers:**

In the Charlotte Lake area, I saw seven groups of day-hikers. One group was traveling from Onion Valley to Road's End and the other was attempting to go to Bullfrog Lake and back to Road's End in a day. I contacted four groups/individuals dayhiking and providing a re-supply of provisions.

**Stock Users and Types:**

Stock use seemed light this season. Sequoia-Kings Pack Station (i.e. (b) (6) ) performed "in and out" drop-offs for his customers. I contacted him approximately five times in the backcountry. NPS Trails made weekly re-supply trips to the CCC's crew at Junction Meadow until mid-July (#of trips unknown as represented in chart). NPS Trails packers then made re-supply trips to the CCC's crew at Charlotte Lake until mid-September. The NPS packers utilized the lower Charlotte Meadow for overnight grazing

9 times, using grain one time. Cedar Grove Pack Station was contacted twice after staying overnight in Vidette and Junction. (b) (6) of Rock Creek Pack Station was contacted at Onion Valley trailhead as he was heading out to a re-supply at Vidette. One private party with one grain fed mule was contacted at Charlotte Lake.

#### Comments on Visitor Use Patterns:

Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) hikers made their way through the patrol area during the first two weeks of July (heading north). Rae Lakes Loop hikers abounded in July and decreased, but remained steady, throughout the season. John Muir Trail (JMT) thru hikers made up the majority of the visitor contacts. There were also many visitors at Kearsarge Lakes, Charlotte Lake, and East Lake. There were fewer visitors making specific trips between the Charlotte Lake and Center Basin areas. Vidette Meadow, Junction Meadow, and East Lake see a great deal of traffic, primarily via Road's End and the Rae Lakes Loop.

## 2. LAW ENFORCEMENT INCIDENTS

Total: 24 verbal warnings (please see case cards), 2 written warnings and 2 citations

Citations issued for (1) not obtaining a wilderness permit and (2) camping on vegetation.

Overall, visitors were compliant with the National Park Service (NPS) regulations and Leave No Trace (LNT) practices. Areas of concern for focus in the future (i.e. majority of warnings given) include: campsite selection, use of approved bear canisters, trash left in bear lockers, and illegal food caches.

Most common among campsite selection violations was camping on vegetation. A common excuse for poor campsite selection was fatigue and darkness. I recommend the permit issuing stations to have large photographs depicting legal and illegal campsites (i.e. bare ground vs. meadow or spotty vegetation and proximity to water). Specific words to describe "bare" ground (such as dirt, rocks, gravel, duff) would likely be helpful. A few visitors were using "old" style Bear Vaults and Ursacks without the liners. I would recommend a photographic lineup of approved bear canisters at the permit issuing stations. Most of the trash in bear lockers was removed from the Charlotte Lake and Kearsarge Lakes areas. Regarding illegal caches, most visitors claimed that an East Side Forest Service permit officer had informed them that caching food at Charlotte Lake was permissible. I would recommend a clarification of NPS regulation regarding caches to the pertinent Forest Service stations. Lastly, one area of concern for the future are individuals providing a re-supply via hiking or stock without a CUA and under the guise of "friends" (i.e. bootleg re-suppliers).

#### More on Caching:

The majority of JMT and PCT hikers require a cache within the Charlotte Lake patrol area. Specifically, illegal caches were found at Charlotte Lake and Vidette Meadows bear lockers. Legal re-supplies into the backcountry occur via packers and hiking friends. The hikers often re-supply themselves by hiking to Onion Valley/Independence. There seems to be a historical use of allowable caches at Charlotte Lake. A possible solution

includes a deposit fronted cache permit system implemented for the area. Otherwise, JMT hikers need to be more explicitly informed of cache options at the time of permit issue. The inherent problem is that some hikers would rather re-supply themselves via a cache. Reasons for this are both financial and of a matter of self-sufficiency. If a pack station could consolidate the re-supply trips for a multitude of hikers (via a cache received by “deadline”), perhaps a discount could be offered by the pack station for the service.

The tree damaged at East Lake in early September was investigated and photographically documented.

Mt. Keith plane crash was investigated and photographically documented.

### 3. SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) INCIDENTS

DATE	LOCATION	TYPE	EVACUATION
July 6	60 Lakes Jct.	Head injury	Helicopter
July 19	S. Glen Pass	Wrist injury	Walking evac.
August 15	Gardiner Basin	Search	Standby
August 16	Bishop Pass	Search	Standby
August 25	Charlotte Lake	Difficulty breathing	Helicopter
September 4	Mt Keith	Plane crash	Investigation

### 4. SERVICE INCIDENTS/ VISITOR ASSISTS (VA)

Charlotte Ranger Station was the in situ Incident Command (IC) for area effects of the Kid fire in early July with 1-1-10 and 3-1-9. Updates were posted at trail junctions, phone calls made to visitor’s families, and food dispersed to visitors experiencing an unexpected delay in their trips. During the Kid fire, collaboration with the Forest Service allowed me to convey evacuation schedules for hikers exiting over Kearsarge Pass.

Food was supplied to two other parties this season.

One party was warmed up in the cabin after their long hike in cold weather (party members were also under-dressed for the weather).

One party was given an Ace bandage for a weak ankle.

I carried a visitors pack to Road’s End from Spinhx Creek due to vomiting illness and weakness.

I gave numerous “recruitment” seminars regarding employment as a NPS Ranger and volunteering in the backcountry.

#### VISITOR SUGGESTIONS:

“more bear lockers”

“please maintain the bear lockers”

“provide a method for private caches”

## 5. RANGER STATION

### Maintenance completed:

- Patched holes in the roof; no leaks all season
- Remounted radio base station in upright position
- Built multi-fit window screen
- Dusted entire station, including ceiling and rafters.
- Moved all movable objects out of the station for through mopping, dusting, and cleaning
- Cleaned oven and range burners
- Cleaned and organize outside wooden box (adjacent to cabin)
- Cleaned windows inside and out (early and late season)
- Cleaned woodstove of foil and ash
- Organized rafter items
- Removed 80 pounds of “stuff” from the cabin

### Maintenance needed:

- Wood floor needs to be sanded and painted (or, preferably, a polyurethane coating)
- Windows are drafty, albeit adequate (if the cabin is to be insulated as reported in “Needs 2006”, windows would need to be replaced with double paned windows; we found the cabin heated nicely and stayed toasty
- While the roof does not leak, the shingles are lifting
- One inside window latch is needed

### Projects Completed in Patrol Area:

- Removed old wooden ladder (safety hazard)
- Removed and minimized material between the woodbin and the station (fire and safety)
- Organized collection of backcountry ranger station logs
- Updated and organized station files; completed collection of patrol area 7.5’ maps
- Organized rafter space
- Oiled all bear boxes in patrol area (winterization)
- Cleaned and/or reduced all found primary and secondary fire-pits within the patrol area
- Replaced the mantels on gas and propane lanterns
- Lowered fluorescent light to ergonomic height (safety)
- Re-mounted front door fire extinguisher, loose (safety)
- Updated medical supplies (discarding expired items)
- Seam sealed fly on station Clip Flashlight tent

### Condition Report:

Solar system is ok; structural integrity of station is ok.



Equipment Report:

The woodstove and the propane stove are working.

The water filter worked well for us with frequent scrubbing of the reservoir and the filters themselves. There is a new set of filters at Charlotte Lake. According to the filter diameter gauge, the current filters are ok.

Pit Toilet:

The pit toilet was emptied and should provide at least 3 seasons' usage.

Resident Rodents:

There was no evidence of rodents inside the station.

Rodents have access to the Snow Survey shed; it is not advisable to store cardboard in the shed.

Items Donated by Johnson's:

Magnetic knife rack (safety)

Tea kettle, copper bottom

Multi-fit window screen

Plastic mixing bowl

Stakes for Clip Flashlight tent

Wall mounted hook rack

C. WILDERNESS PROTECTION

1. General Resource Conditions.

The *camp areas* seemed to hold in a steady qualitative state through the season. There are stock sites in all major areas. The most heavily used are those in Vidette Meadows, Junction Meadows, and at East Lake.

The *trails* were all in great condition throughout the season. Snow on the passes was gone by mid-July. The CCC's crew in coordination with the NPS completed great work in the Junction Meadow and Kearsarge Pass, and Glen Pass areas. Two specific projects are the re-routing of the trail around lower Junction Meadow and the addition of switchbacks to the west side of Kearsarge Pass. The visiting public commented frequently as to the hard work, professionalism, and end product that the CCC's crew produced. They are to be commended.

We hiked every maintained trail in the patrol area. Cross country routes covered included: Upper Charlotte Creek, Gardiner Pass-Gardner Basin-Sixty Lakes Col, Milly's Foot Pass-Upper Kern Drainage-Great Western Divide, Upper Center Basin-Junction Pass area, Cunningham Creek-Longley Pass, Harrison Pass-Deerhorn Saddle-Upper Bubbs Creek, and many peaks.

Illegal *fire rings* were not a major issue this season. Of the 59 illegal firepits that were removed this season in the patrol area, only a few seemed to have been used this summer. There is a persistent trend for existing firepits to be built up by visitors wherever fires are allowed. Also noticed was the tendency for visitors to place rocks over a fire as a means of putting the fire out. All primary and secondary firepits in the patrol area were reduced and/or cleaned at the end of the season.

*Drift fences* are in good condition.

The larger *bear locker* at Charlotte Lake was squared up a little after damage from a previous winter. Some more strong-handed levering should fix it. Or it could be replaced. Visitors had a tendency to leave the boxes open near the end of the season. All bear lockers in the patrol area were oiled at the end of the season.

**2. Meadow Management.**

The Meadows were opened according to “dry” seasonal conditions. The dry conditions this season neither produced nor provoked any meadows of concern. According to 9-2-32, the meadows appeared to have had average use. Of particular interest was that the weekly grazing of the Charlotte Meadow complex by NPS packers produced a very minimal effect.

I assisted 9-2-32 with the Residual Biomass sampling on September 10 at East Lake. He was able to incorporate interested CCC’s crew members in two other days of sampling in the area.

I completed a majority of the Repeat Photographs for meadow monitoring.

**3. IBP/Concession Contacts.**

Cedar Grove Pack Station: contacted 2x. Took down East Lake fence.

Rock Creek: 1 contact. Nothing remarkable.

Sequoia-Kings Pack Station: contacted 5x. (b) (6) was professional and amiable. He was helpful in removing trash from the station.

**4. Signs.**

Signs were removed at Shorty’s Cabin near Vidette Meadows and on the unmaintained trail to Vidette Lakes. The “No Fires” sign at 10000’ on the Vidette switchbacks is missing. The “No Camping Below Sphinx Creek” sign was turned around as noted in the 2006 EOS report. Illegal fires at Lake Reflection may warrant the return of the “No Fires” sign in the future.

**5. Bear Incidents.**

Bears were active in the patrol area this season. Most visitor reports pertained to Paradise Valley and Onion Valley. Bear were sighted and remained persistent at Charlotte Lake over a week long period in August. One bear was purposely baited by visitors at Charlotte Lake and at least one bear obtained scented items from a visitor at Charlotte Lake. The paintball gun at the station is ready for next season. Bears were seen in all popular parts of the patrol area at least once.

**6. Wildlife Observations.**

Please see Wildlife Observation Card.

**7. Resource Impacts/Issues.**

Addressing last season’s concerns: no negative visitor comments were made regarding helicopter use in the Park.

The largest resource impact seems to be at stock campsites. Denuded groundcover, consistently built-up fire rings and collection of illegal firewood are the main issues.

**8. Minor Resource Projects Completed.**

- Removed 70 lbs of barb wire and other metal debris from Vidette area
- Removed 59 illegal fire rings from patrol area

9. Fire Ring Data:

Fire Rings Removed:

59 firepits were removed in the patrol area: 9 in the Charlotte Lake area, 4 at Bullfrog Lake(very old), 10 at Kearsarge Lakes, 7 in upper Charlotte Creek, 3 at Lake Reflection, 6 in the East Lake area, 7 in the Center Creek area, 3 in Upper Bubbs Creek, 8 in Vidette Meadows, 1 in Sixty Lakes Basin, and 1 on the Kearsarge Pass trail (1/4 mile west of the junction).

35 fire-pits were reduced. 43 firepits were cleaned. These firepits were predominately located in the Vidette Meadow, Junction Meadow, and East Lake areas.

Overall, usage of legal fire-pits (Vidette and Junction) seemed moderate. I found the remains of possibly two illegal fires at Charlotte Lake, one at Kearsarge Lake, and two at Reflection Lake. The illegal fire rings at Kearsarge Lakes were leftover from late last season or early this season. Off-trail travel revealed the remains of a handful of illegal fire rings, especially in the Charlotte Creek, Bullfrog Lake, and Center Creek areas. It seems that regular cleaning could in most cases prevent the over-building of fire rings.

10. Campsite Conditions.

Overall conditions are ok. The worst sanitation problems occurred at East Lake, near the stock camps. Firewood availability is ok at all locations, except at East Lake where legal firewood is found further from the established camps. Visitors appropriate use of approved bear canisters and bear lockers was predominate over the season.

D. Recommendations/Work Needed

- The front step of the cabin could be remodeled more ergonomically (and less of a safety hazard).
- Approximately 45 T-posts and barbed wire debris need to be removed from the East Lake drift fence area (pile of debris is found ~150 east of drift fence gate, along line of fence)
- A large number of illegal fire rings and barbed wire debris needs to be removed in Gardiner Basin.
- One bag of misc. stuff needs to be backhauled from station bear locker.
- One discarded bear canister will likely be found at the "last" (most western) Kearsarge Lake bear locker

E. Equipment Needs

- regulator for the life-o-gen units and two nasal cannulas.

- Other items necessary for the first aid kit include oral glucose and additional PCR's.
- Additional cabin items needed include duct tape, a pair of leather work gloves (XL), and a small fire extinguisher (type BC, size 1, for the kitchen area).

2 radio batteries were left at the station.

Also:

Please see Complete Charlotte Lake Ranger Station Inventory.

**Le Conte Ranger Station**  
**2007 End of Season Report**  
**By David Gordon**

**Visitor Usage/Patrols**

	<u>Visitor Contacts</u>	<u>Day Hikers</u>	<u>Miles Patrolled</u>
June (9 days)	78	5	54
July	368	18	199
August	527	20	189
September	226	14	193
October (10 days)	31	4	43
Totals	1,230	61	678

This was a very low snowpack season at about 1/3 of normal, with only a few small patches of snow remaining on the passes at the end of June – travel across passes and creeks was not a problem for most of the summer. The weather was mostly warm and dry with the exception of wet, monsoonal patterns for a few days at the end of both July and August, and cold, winter snow storms in mid-September and early October (7” of snow at Le Conte).

Hiker visitation was somewhat lower than past summers, in spite of the relatively good conditions. Contacts indicated the following approximate proportions of routes: 50% entire JMT (mostly north to south); 20% N. Lake to/from S.Lake; 15% in/out over Bishop; 10% all or part of PCT; 5% miscellaneous. Groups consisted of nine Boy Scout troops, two Sierra Club groups, two school groups, a “Call of the Wild” woman’s group and a Southern Yosemite Mt. Guide group.

Regular patrols were made along the JMT from Muir Pass to Mather Pass and on the Bishop Pass Trail through Dusy Basin. Additional patrols included Palisades Basin, Cataract Creek, Dumbbell Lake, “Observation Lakes”, Ionian Basin, Hester Lake Basin and the Middle Fork Trail to Tehipite Valley.

Although Le Conte Canyon was stock accessible from late June and most meadows were open to grazing on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the first stock did not appear until July 22<sup>nd</sup>, afterward, stock use was heavier than the past three seasons. Twenty-five stock groups were either observed/contacted or reported to me (20 commercial, 4 private and 1 administrative), consisting of 162 horses/mules and 4 llamas with a total of 114 stock users (including packers and clients, if traveling with the stock). About one-half of the commercial groups were from Rainbow Pack Outfitters over Bishop Pass, and the other half coming in over Muir Pass (High Sierra Pack Station, Cedar Grove Pack Station, Pine Creek Pack Station, Frontier Pack Trains and Bishop Pack Outfitters).

**Law Enforcement Incidents**

This summer, permits were asked to be shown for all groups, unless I was in route to an incident. With the exception of a few cases where party members had separated from the permittee or a permit was lost, all groups had permits. All groups were also asked about food storage with most (99%) having canisters and all having canisters where required (Dusy/Palisade Basins).

One citation was written for a dog (“pet in closed area”) at Little Pete Meadow with a verbal warning to the same person for not having the dog on a leash. Other warnings were given for relatively minor infractions as follows: tents on vegetation (3 verbal, 4 notes left on tents); poor manure removal (1); improper high line for stock (1 administration); food storage (5 “Ursak” users were told they needed to use food storage boxes south of Pinchot Pass). As with previous seasons, the most regulation infractions were illegal fires above 10,000 feet, discovered after the violator had departed – more than usual were discovered early season probably due to easier early access to the high country prior to ranger presence.

**Search, Rescue and Medical Incidents**

As with most seasons, there were a few minor altitude sicknesses and sore knees encountered that were alleviated with rest/hydration/electrolytes for AMS and rest, elevation and/or cold therapy for the knees. SAR’s occurred as follows (my participation in each was somewhat peripheral):

<b>Date</b>	<b>SAR</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Disposition</b>
06/30/07	#19	Thunderbolt Pass	Broken Leg	Helo Evacuation
08/15-16/07	#55	Dusy/Palisade Basins	Search	Body Recovery
09/07/07	#69	Palisades Lakes	AMS Medical	Helo Evacuation

### **Service Incidents**

Service to visitors was typical of most summers and included: repairing a water pump/filter, a stove and boots; requesting 735S to make phone calls for hikers with altered pick-up or resupply dates; supplying food (many), fuel, water treatment tablets, sunblock and toilet paper. Most service involved providing information on routes, campsites, weather, fires (smoke), fishing and bears/food storage. Refuge and meals were provided for several hikers caught unprepared for the snowstorm in October.

Frog crews (6 at times) spent the night at the Ranger Station and were provided meals and the use of a “guest tent”, trash barrel and sleeping gear to minimize their loads hiking to/from their camp over Bishop Pass to/from South Lake. Additionally, per request from Danny Boiano, I did an informal frog survey in the “Observation Lakes” basin – frogs were found at five lakes, but three of the lakes had about 10% of the frogs/tadpoles deceased (most likely from Chytrid fungus....3 samples were taken for lab analysis at SNARL).

Other projects included “orchard grass” eradication with Erik Frenzel along the JMT near Ladder Camp and Grouse Meadows in July (about 3 dozen plants removed on three occasions) and the removal of two memorial plaques cemented on top of “Mt. Hansen” on the Ragged Spur near the Ionian Basin.

### **Ranger Station**

After discovering another cabin break-in upon my arrival in June, a broken window and destroyed shutter were replaced. Generally, the cabin is in good condition and remains rodent-proof. Three new batteries were installed for the solar system which is working perfectly. The wood stove, propane stove, water filter and outhouse are in good condition as well.

The cabin has the following emergency/winter supplies: ten boxes of wood/kindling, plenty of food, lantern with several propane canisters, 3-burner Coleman stove with white gas.

### **Meadow Management (see Appendix I)**

Most meadows opened for grazing per designated “dry opening” on July 1<sup>st</sup>, with the exception of Grouse Meadow which was delayed until July 10<sup>th</sup>; however, stock did not come into Le Conte Canyon until July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Grazing this summer was more spread out over all the meadows with approximate usage as follows: Grouse Meadow – 103 stock nights (80 administrative); Ladder Camp Meadow – 31 stock nights; Little Pete Meadow – 67 stock nights; Big Pete Meadow – 80 stock nights; and Deer and Palisade Lake Meadows – less than 20 stock nights each. All meadows were monitored for signs of over grazing, but seemed to stay well below their grazing capacities.

Little Pete Meadow was monitored for residual biomass on September 11 – only the “Core” plot showed evidence of grazing. The ungrazed “Reference” plot had considerably less biomass than the previous two seasons due to the dry condition.

Ladder Camp Meadow was photographed from five designated locations before and after grazing (7/9 and 10/2) that will serve as “reference” photos to monitor current and future use. Also, “repeat photos” for all of the meadows and photos in the “Le Conte Meadows Photo Book” were taken with GPS coordinates throughout the summer.

Twenty CUA reports forms were completed for all of the commercial stock groups that were contacted (additional reports were also completed for administration stock use and walking commercial non-stock groups). With the exception of inadequate manure removal for two groups, camp conditions were good and stock regulations adhered to.

### **Trails/Drift Fences**





(b) (7)(F)

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations contain some that have been make in previous EOS reports – still considered relevant and important:

1. After four season of observing early season meadow condition, Grouse Meadow has consistently been too wet to open at the scheduled opening dates for dry, normal or wet years. The opening dates should be delayed by two weeks (dry: July 15<sup>th</sup>; normal: August 1<sup>st</sup>; wet: August 31<sup>st</sup>). There are alternative grazing meadows that can be used in the interim (Ladder Camp, Little and Big Pete Meadows).
2. Group size should be restricted to 8 in cross-country, alpine areas (as Yosemite: ¼ off any trail).
3. Commercial stock supported groups larger than 8 or 10 should provide a “privy tent/area” by digging a trench and filling it in upon departure.
4. Water proof, tie-on (computer generated preferably) permits should be universally issued (SEKI, YOSE and Inyo N.F.) – more convenient for visitor and ranger...also would encourage compliance.
5. The double-log, make-shift footbridge at the lower Dusy Creek crossing should be replaced with a real bridge. This bridge is submerged by swift water in early season of wet years requiring a potentially hazardous detour.
6. As mentioned in the “Trails” section, work needs to be done on the five river crossings of the JMT above and below Helen Lake (between 10,800 feet and 11,600 feet). Initially it should be surveyed by trail crew management early season, to assess possible rectification (see map and photos from the 2006 EOS Report).

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park



# Little Five Lakes 2007 Wilderness Ranger End of Season Report

From: Will Jaynes

Through: Erika Jostad, Kern Supervisor

Read and approved: \_\_\_\_\_ signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 10/25/07

To: Gregg Fauth, Wilderness Coordinator

Read and approved: \_\_\_\_\_ signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 10/30/07

2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

**2007**

## **End of Season Report**

### **Little Five Lakes Ranger Station**



By Will Jaynes

June 6, 2007 through September 3, 2007

## **General Observations**

### **Contacts**

359 visitor contacts  
63 Day hikers  
479 miles hiked

I saw a lot more day hikers this season because of my schedule that had me hiking in and out to Little Five every two weeks. Most of the day hikers I saw were within a few miles of the Mineral King Trailheads.

### **Start of Season**

After Backcountry Ranger training Laura Pilewski ((b)(7)) and I spent five days on the Hockett Plateau. One of the nights I spent at the Quinn Ranger Station. It was a quiet week as we only saw 10 visitors, most of them day hikers on our first day. Both stations seemed to be in good order and needed no major repairs.

After coming back we had EMT training and then I spent June 27<sup>th</sup> – July 5<sup>th</sup> on the East Side. I spent about five days with Alison Steiner ((b)(7)) helping her set up her station. We set up the drift fence, the demo camp, and dug a new pit for the toilet. We also climbed Mt. Langley while scouting locations for a trail counter. We then spent a night at Crabtree for some additional EMS training. I then made my way back to Little Five via the Willow chute and the Chagoopa Plateau.

I got into Little Five on July 7<sup>th</sup> with Erika Jostad ((b)(7)) and Dave Yemm ((b)(7)) to set up the yurt.

Similar to last season, I started to see a rise in visitors the last week in July that continued throughout the end of my season.

### **Law Enforcement and Citations**

No citations were issued in the Little Five area. I had to speak with a few campers about campsite selection and reminded more than a few people about Leave No Trace ethics. Most visitors seemed genuinely interested in learning and complied without complaint or incident.

I did encounter 2 separate dogs on the trail, one at Sky Blue Lake and one near Groundhog Meadow. The visitors at Sky Blue honored my request to vacate the Wilderness (to the best of my knowledge). The owners of the dog near Groundhog

## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

Meadow were written a citation by Mitch Hauptman (b) (7) after I requested he meet me at the Trailhead due to the hostile nature of the contact.



I also requested a citation for a group I met at Lower Funston Meadow who left a hot fire, trash, and items in the bear box. They did these things a day after a lengthy Leave No Trace discussion I had with them.

### Medicals

There were no medicals in the Little Five area.

### Transports

There were no transports in the Little Five area.

### Fatalities

There were no fatalities in the Little Five area.

### Searches

There were no searches in the Little Five area.

### Weather

Weather was generally very good this summer and much warmer than last season. There were days that it even felt hot at Little Five. Like season there was about a week's worth of rain at the end of July.

### Fires

The Willow Fire in the Willow Creek drainage was a lightning caused fire that started in late July and grew to almost 200 acres by the end of my season. It caused some smoke



## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

(mostly one large flume) and led to many visitor questions. It didn't bring near as much smoke as the fire near Santa Barbara which brought in a lot of smoke many evenings.



### **Use Patterns**

#### **Backpackers**

There are a number of different loops that backpackers coming to the Little Five area use. The four most popular seem to be:

1. Black Rock Pass to Sawtooth Pass—This seemed to be the most popular loop with the majority of people going out of Sawtooth. Most hikers do this loop in four days.
2. Kaweah Gap to Black Rock Pass—This hike seemed more popular earlier in the season.
3. Franklin Pass to Black Rock Pass—This hike was probably the third most popular loop (Although very close to being second) with most hikers starting exclusively in the Franklin Pass direction.
4. Crescent Meadow to Crescent Meadow – This hike past Bear Paw, through Kaweah Gap, up to Little Five, over Black Rock Pass was surprisingly popular this year. It seemed to be popular with groups of two, mostly younger folks about college age.

Most backpackers that stayed at Little Five arrived between 1600-1800 and only stayed one night. Only a handful stayed a second night and none stayed more than two.

#### **Stock**

There was very little stock use in the Little Five area this year. I saw no commercial stock in the Little Five area. I did contact one commercial group in the Kern

#### **Administrative**

There was a trail crew in the area in late August/early September. They camped at Lost Canyon and the Big Arroyo Crossing. The trail crew did use stock.

## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

There was an admin trip that used stock before I got into Little Five this season.

### **Commercial**

I only contacted two commercial groups in my area this summer. One from Outward Bound who had all their pertinent paperwork and was very friendly. The second group I contacted was the Golden Trout Pack Outfit. The packer was carrying his CUA, but no identification. For more info about this contact please refer to my CUA contact form.

### **Over flights**

There were many military flights throughout the Little Five area. I believe them all to be at least 3000 feet above ground level.

## **Natural Resources**

### **Bear Activity**

There was very little bear activity in the Little Five patrol area, and none reported by visitors. I did see tracks early season between the station and Long Lake.

### **Wildlife**

Yellow-bellied marmots and Golden Mantled ground squirrels were a constant presence around the station and campground areas. There was a family of marmots (two adults and three young) near the campground that remained curious about my activities throughout the season. This was the second season that a family of marmots in this location provided entertainment.

Mule deer were also quite visible throughout the season in the Little Five area. I didn't see nearly as many fawns as last season.

Pacific Tree frogs were very vocal early in the season. The tadpoles suffered from a low water year.

I saw pikas in the rocks above Columbine Lake and just off the trail below Monarch Lakes. I also heard them in various places throughout the summer, including the little hill east of the station and Glacier Pass.

I didn't see any coyotes this summer, but they were very vocal throughout the season. I heard them mostly after dark but also early some mornings.

## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

### Vegetation

Meadow monitoring was not done because of little stock use and my short season.

As noted in last season's report by, the area around the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin lacks vegetation and is much trampled by campers where vegetation exists.

### Resource Projects

My resource projects suffered from my short season. One of the things I did was remove a Restoration Site sign from the Lower Big Five area. There was no active restoration taking place so I felt it unnecessary to have a sign. I did make the place look very unattractive for camping.



(b) (5)

My final project is ongoing and should be completed before next season. I am in the process of writing a short, but informational guide entitled, "How to be the Little Five Ranger."

### Cultural Resources

#### Historic Sites

The Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin did not suffer any major damage over the summer. Visitors seem very interested in the structure and some seem surprised that they are not allowed to stay inside.

### Backcountry Facilities

#### Yurt

## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

The yurt held up brilliantly throughout the season and I see no reason why it shouldn't last for many summers to come. It withstands rain, wind, and the cold as well as any permanent structure. The door weathered the winter fine and should be protected with the old door to withstand snow (pictures are on file). Hopefully the dome can be left at Little Five as it is cumbersome and takes up a lot of room on the helicopter. Erika and Dave both thought the yurt looked better than ever.

The drip edge is a bit chewed up from the marmots, but served its purposes well. It may need to be replaced in the future if it continues to be a snack for marmots. They also chewed on the plywood that covers the storage boxes.

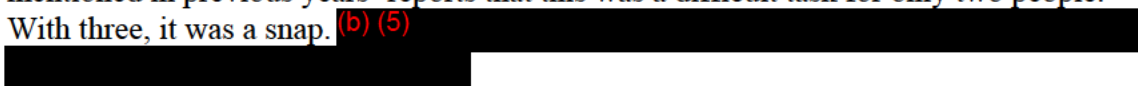
The porch platform held up fine and I don't anticipate any problems with it in the near future.

I had no problems with fleas or mice in the yurt this season.

(b) (4)

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I was fortunate to have Erika and Dave to help put up and take down the yurt. It had been mentioned in previous years' reports that this was a difficult task for only two people. With three, it was a snap. (b) (5)

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Two of the three metal boxes at the station are in OK shape and should be utilized for a few more years. The third (the one located on the Southwest corner) leaks and doesn't lock.

I had no problems with the electrical system whatsoever. We had the batteries checked before the season and they worked fine all summer. The inverter also did its job throughout the season.

Since I had a limited number of days at the station this season, the toilet got very little use. The pit should be OK for a few more summers.

### Signs

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(b) (5)

## Trails

### Trail Activities (work accomplished)

Visitor contacts were my primary activity along the trail. I contacted 359 visitors on the trail throughout the season.

I used my bow saw to cut a tree that was hanging over the trail just north of the outlet of Long Lake.



I did some very minor rehab to some trail relocations in the area. My relocation from last season seems to be holding up very well.

### Problem Areas

Most of the trails in the Little Five area are in very good condition. (b) (5)

## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

(b) (5)

### Camp Areas

#### Conditions

The majority of camping area in the Little Five area is clean and crowding on most nights is not an issue. (b) (5)

(b) (5) camping in the area seems to center around bear box locations.

Camping at Little Five Lakes is almost exclusively near the bear box. Repeat visitors seem to be the only ones who venture away from the box to spots like the ones across the lake from the ranger station.

Columbine Lake has some very inappropriate sites along the trail and close to the lake. I talked with many visitors about campsite selection here.

The partially buried barrel remains at Pinto Lake.

#### Sanitation

Sanitation issues continue to be somewhat of a concern at Little Five and other heavily camped in areas. Most of the problems seem to center around visitors not properly burying waste and/or not carrying out toilet paper. For example, at Little Five I spend an afternoon every 2 weeks just picking up toilet paper in the campground.

(b) (5)

### Fire Rings

19 Removed/Dozens reduced and cleaned

The biggest fire rings and the ones that required the most attention were at the Big Arroyo crossing and Moraine Lake. (b) (5)

(b) (5) I removed the large fire ring nearest the bear box.

I removed more fire pits this season than last season (19 vs. 16) in a lot shorter amount of time. Most of the pits I removed were in heavily used areas close to existing pits.



## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report



### Firewood Availability

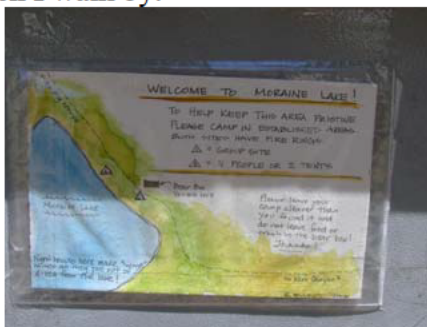
Availability doesn't seem to be a major problem in areas where we allow campfires.

(b) (5)

### Food Storage

Food storage in the Little Five area was not an issue this season. A large majority of the visitors carried bear canisters (which I didn't feel was the case last season) and those who didn't utilized bear boxes. I saw very few people hanging their food.

I put all of Roxanne Everett's beautiful bear box signs back in their proper places after they accidentally came out last year with the old lockers. I also put signs on the new boxes imploring visitors to close both latches. For whatever reason the new boxes seem to only have the top latch closed when I walk by.



### Trailheads

Because of my schedule this summer, I became much more familiar with the Trailheads this summer. They were often crowded, but unlike last season they were always clean. The mile or so of trail leading from the parking lots were also much cleaner this year which I attribute to the excellent Trailhead Rangers out of Mineral King.

### Issuing Office

The Mineral King trailhead does a very good job. They take suggestions and were seemed genuinely interested in the areas they were issuing permits for. I was impressed

## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

by the amount of time that Dave and Julie Humphries, in particular, spent hiking this season. This is a plus for the visitors as well as the Little Five ranger.

One thing that I think could be helpful is that I often hear the Lodgepole Trailhead letting rangers know of large groups heading their direction. This is probably a good idea for all issuing offices.

I mentioned this last season, but I feel it should be brought up again. I think we need to be more selective as to who gets recommended to hike cross country. I had a number of parties who were told about Glacier Pass unsolicited. I feel that this is a bad idea and could lead to potential problems. I also feel the map hanging in the office showing cross country routes needs to come down.

### Communications

(b) (7)(E), (b) (5)



### Case Numbers (Case card only)

#071336	Verbal warning – Dog in Wilderness
#071337	Extinguished fire
#071338	Visitor Assist (Route help)
#071339	Visitor Assist (Route help/cross country)
#071340	Visitor Assist (Route help/cross country)
#071341	Visitor Assist (Campsite selection)
#071342	Visitor Assist (Information)
#071343	Visitor Assist (Information)
#071344	Visitor Assist (Lent stove)
#071345	Visitor Assist (Information)
#071346	Verbal warning – Noise
#071347	Extinguished fire
#071348	Visitor Assist (Information)

### Needs for 2008

Carpet section for yurt

Three large tarps (all tarps used to cover platform for winter are in poor shape)



## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

Outside thermometer

Mattress covers

Electric fence signs

Protective eye goggles

Fire resistant base for woodstove

Colander

Large wash basin (for laundry and bathing – the current buckets are a bit small for these chores)

### Recommendations

(b) (5)



## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

(b) (5)



### **Pertinent Inventory (to the best of my knowledge)**

1 roll small clear trash bags

10 Large black trash bags

3 burlap sacks

405 2" Galvanized screws

63  $\frac{3}{4}$  " screws

4 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  " screws

18  $\frac{1}{2}$  " large head screws

7  $\frac{1}{2}$  " large head screws

2 1" screws

6 1" large head screws

4  $\frac{3}{4}$  " large head screws

4  $\frac{7}{16}$  " screws

2 1  $\frac{1}{16}$  " thick screws with attached washer

2  $\frac{9}{16}$  " tick screws with attached washer

2 full sets area maps

1 National Geographic Park map

Bushnell Binoculars

100' nylon cord, plus lots of pea cord

1 Garcia bear canister

2 small propane tanks, full

1 large propane tank, less than half full

1+ gallons white gas

1+ Liters denatured alcohol

1 box strike anywhere matches

## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

4 Sunscreen tubes  
1 hand soap  
1 bottle dish soap  
10 rolls, toilet paper  
2 packages, paper towels  
2 sponges  
1/3 bottle Tide laundry soap

3 oxygen tanks, full  
Lots of Ibuprofen, Aspirin, Ointment  
7 pairs latex gloves  
2 pair disposable sun goggles  
12 insect sting relief swabs  
9 junior band aids  
6 butterfly closures  
1 box band aids, nearly full  
2 tweezers  
1 glucose  
2 sam splints  
2 wire splints  
3 2" ace bandages  
1 4" ace bandages  
1 large piece moleskin  
2 triangular bandages  
3 rolls stretch gauze  
2 3M 9211 respirators (N95)  
1 syringe  
1 micro shield  
2 instant ice packs  
4 dozen alcohol pads 18 4 x 4 gauze pads  
5 4 x 4 dressing sponges  
1 8" x 7 1/2 " combine dressing  
3 3" x 4" sterile pads  
1 roll 2" surgical adhesive tape  
1 roll 3" adhesive tape  
1 roll 1/2" antiseize tape  
2 2" bandage compresses  
1 package 5 1/8" x 3" suture strips  
4 packages 6 1/2" x 4 suture strips  
1 stethoscope

1 yellow helmet  
4 pairs leather gloves  
6 pair ear plugs

## 2007 Little Five Lakes End of Season Report

2 pencils  
3 dozen pens  
3 sharpies  
1 pair scissors  
15 8 ½" x 11" clear plastic holders  
6 pocket pads (yellow fire notepads)  
1 steno pad

### **Preliminary Recommendations for Restoration**

#### **Signs**

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#### **Trails**

(b) (5)

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#### **Campsites**

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**DRAFT**

11/03/2007

**End of Season Report  
McClure Ranger Station 2007**  
Durkee & Meier



## Summary

We arrived June 25<sup>th</sup> and found the station had been broken into by someone prying the hasp off the snow door. A piece of plywood on the ceiling was then pried up to gain access to the cabin. No food was taken or other damage, but all the wood was burned.

This year was the third driest on record – 1977 was the driest. It's worth noting that 1977 had early spring rain storms and rain through much of July. Until the end of August, McClure this year had only about 2" of rain from thundershowers, so was probably a much drier year than '77. Meadows and streams were at August levels. *Calamagrostis* and most other grasses were in full bloom. Grasses had already produced seeds in most all the meadows of Evolution Valley. Opening dates for a dry year were approximately correct, though Colby might be delayed another week because of wet ground on the route most packers take over to the commonly used stock camp on the south side of the river.

Stock carried approximately 50 visitors into the area this year requiring over 200 nights of grazing in the Evolution Valley meadows. Based on meadow rotation for grazing, McClure was closed to grazing this year. Evolution Meadow received over 100 nights of grazing and was in reasonable condition by the end of the season. Colby had maybe 20 nights, but the stock tended not to actually graze there, going up into the stringers east of the main meadow instead. Darwin Creek received around 80 nights. The stock drifted down into the stringers just below the camp. Those "pocket" meadow withstood grazing well and showed little sign of intensive use. This might be because stock grazes the drier moraines in between as they travel and, as a result, don't concentrate in those meadow. Stock use was split about evenly between High Sierra Pack Station and Mike Morgan at North Lake. Frontier came through once and Cedar Grove once.

Hiker use was about the same as last year. John Muir Trail through hikers constitute a steady and heavy use – and it may be increasing over the last 5 years or so. Rob Pilewski (Crabtree) and I agree that about 2,000 or even more JMT hikers are coming through each season over the last several years. The Muir Trail Ranch accepted 600 food caches for through-hikers and most all of them were picked up. The lack of snow allowed PCT hikers to get through without problems. Most had already been through by 6/25. We saw perhaps 60 or so by the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of July. The semi-good news is a lot of younger hikers are taking up backpacking (as opposed to aging baby-boomers of the last 20 years...). I contacted a bunch of people for tents on vegetation (50 warnings); rinsing clothes in streams (70); and human waste too close to camp or water (3). The latter is a violation that's increasing and cause for some concern. It's rare to actually catch someone at it, but there's sign – toilet paper and feces near camps and streams – that this is becoming a problem, especially among early-season PCT hikers.

We had several SARs: Peter Steckel found a 2<sup>nd</sup> body from an Army plane crash (1942) on the Mendel Glacier; I was liaison with Inyo Sheriff on a search for a missing climber (found dead near Isosceles Peak); a hiker got separated from his party crossing Wahoo Col, initiating a search on both sides of the boundary; 2 women doing the South – North Lake loop as a day hike/run badly overestimated their abilities and blatantly ignored NWS forecasts of a winter storm ("We live in Bishop and the weather forecast is always wrong."). I gave them food, clothing and shelter at McClure Station as well as had their families radioed with a revised ETA.

We finished up the Campsite Inventory for the Evolution Lake, McGee Lakes and Emerald Lake zones. Compared to the data established in the 1970s with the first survey, there are perhaps 30% fewer campsites. Those campsites that remain are significantly smaller, have fewer "improvements" (rock walls, benches, tables) and have fewer scars or other impacts on trees. From personal experience, this reduced impact is a direct result of 3 decades of wilderness rangers and permit issuers patiently educating visitors in minimum impact techniques and rangers rehabilitating and relocating camps. Education is, of course, a long and slow process: one camper at a time. It's good to have statistical confirmation that it's effective.

Visitor Protection

Statistics:

	<u>Visitor Contacts</u>	<u>Miles Patrolled</u>
June (7 days):	80	47
July:	466	144
August:	857	169
September:	343	120
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,746</b>	<b>480</b>

Citations: 1 (Dog)  
Warnings: 50 (tent on meadow)  
70 (rinsing clothes in stream)  
3 (sanitation)  
1 (private party with stock at McClure – not told of temp. closure)

SAR Mendel recovery of WWII Airman  
Liaison with Inyo Sherriff on (b) (6) SAR  
Darwin Bench SAR (separated party)  
Standby for Fresno SAR

Ranger Station

As noted, the station was broken into by prying off the hasp on the snow door. In the fall, David Karplus sent in Bill Reisland who carried out several needed projects:

- Reinforced snow entrance and added larger lock mechanism.
- Built propane storage box behind cabin for 2 tanks.
- Hard-lined propane line into cabin to stove and added shut-off valve inside.
- Built containment box for solar batteries.
- Added interior bolts for shutters.

It is really nice to have professional looking carpentry done on the station. None of the ranger stations have ever had professional work done to maintain them since they were built (except McClure last year). Wilderness rangers are, of course, supremely talented, but square corners and good materials are not our strong point. As a result, most of the stations look pretty seedy. We clearly need to work out some sort of regular survey and maintenance schedule for the rest of the SEKI wilderness ranger stations. Obviously, Karplus has the personnel and expertise to do this.

Communication

(b) (7)(E), (b) (5)

[Redacted text block containing multiple lines of blacked-out information]

## Evolution Meadow

Like all of the meadows of Evolution Valley, it is showing signs of extensive encroachment by Lodgepole Pine with perhaps 20% of the meadow having 6 foot or shorter lodgepole (probably 15 to 20 years old) throughout the meadow. A seasonal side stream meanders through the north meadow but the water stays in a fairly deep channel and does not form extensive wetland or marshy areas. Less than 2% of the main meadow has standing water in low areas. Two pair of sandpipers nested in the area in 2006 and 2007.

In 2004 the stock camp at the west end of the meadow and just south of the JMT was closed to camping in conjunction with the temporary closure of the Evolution Meadow to grazing. The attached *Figure 8 Evolution Meadow: Campsites* map shows the location of all campsites in the meadow area as well as the locations of those commonly used by visitors with stock. The closed site and 3 other potential stock camps in the area are:

- **Stock Camp 1.** After Stock Camp 4 was closed, the McClure ranger chose a camp on the south side of the river for stock users to camp at. This camp had substantially recovered from previous high use levels and had likely not been used much since the 1960s, when the JMT was relocated out of the meadow and onto the north side of the river. As recommended by the Stock Use Regulations and area rangers, some visitors with stock camped at this site this season. It is not especially favored by stock users because of the uneven ground and numerous small trees in the area which make it difficult to line animals out. There is also not much space for tents without camping on vegetation. Most packers access this site from the JMT on the north side of the stream and meadow. They cross the meadow and then the stream at the crossing used by the old JMT. Stream bank erosion has resulted from this route as well as a new use trail on the south side of the river and into the camp (See *Figure 1* and *Figure 8*).



Figure 1: Stock Camp 1 on South side of Evolution Creek, recommended as new stock site following closure of traditional JMT site (Stock Camp 4).

- **Stock Camp 2.** Mid-meadow and right by the JMT is the “Green Brothers Cow Camp” (named so because of a carving on a tree dating from the late 1800s). This was used by the majority of stock users in 2006 and 2007. It is favored by packers because it has flat ground and space to line out animals. A disadvantage is that the camp is only a few feet from the JMT, is one of the few hiker camps available in the meadow, and stock users tend to tie their animals in or only a few feet from



the fire area. There is sufficient space here for a number of tents without putting them on vegetation. (See Figure 2). On a site visit 5 days after a stock party with 12 animals had camped there, the camp and adjacent meadow area smelled strongly of urine and manure. The camp had manure throughout as well as damage to trees and roots.



**Figure 2: Stock Camp 2, "Green Brothers Cow Camp," on north side of Evolution Creek by JMT. Note manure and damage to tree and roots.**

- **Stock Camp 3.** This site is located on the south side of Evolution Creek and about ¼ mile downstream of the meadow on a granite bench. It was used extensively by the trail crew in the mid-90s and is accessed by following the old JMT along the river from the present JMT crossing of Evolution Creek. It is used only occasionally by NPS packers and almost never by commercial or private stock parties. Packers have said they can't see their animals grazing from the camp. It has room for only a couple of tents and requires water be hauled up a fairly steep hill. There is also little room to line animals out because the campsite slopes sharply uphill behind the camp. (No Photo).
- **Stock Camp 4.** This camp is located on the west end of the meadow and a few yards from the JMT. It was closed to both stock and hiker use in 2004. The area is devoid of vegetation for about 50 feet out from the center of the camp because of decades of stock and hiker use. Several trees show damage from ropes used to tie animals as well as old impact scars at the base from pawing animals. A couple of trees may have died from this damage. (See Figure 3). The area can accommodate a number of tents without camping on vegetation. It is well away from the several camps that hikers have traditionally preferred and, with some mitigation, is not likely to have further resource damage should it be reopened to stock.



**Figure 3: Stock Camp 4, closed in 2004 is located on the north side of the Evolution Creek and at the lower (west) end of the meadow. Decades of use has denuded the immediate area of vegetation and possibly killed several trees.**

### McClure Meadow

McClure is approximately 25 acres (see *Figure 7 McClure Meadow: Campsites, Wetland and Lodgepole Encroachment (2007)* ). Last year I mapped both the edge of the extant meadow and the boundaries of significant young (< ~15 year) lodgepole growth. The young trees now comprise about 5 acres (~20%) of the meadow. Though not mapped, this is about the same percentage for Evolution and Colby meadows. In the early 1960s, Soil and Moisture cut out all lodgepole less than about 8 inches in diameter in the meadow (as well as at Colby and Evolution). They also built check dams along the small creeks coming into the meadow on the theory that lodgepole invasion was due to a lowering water table caused by stream channel and bank erosion. It's unclear if this work raised the water table in McClure (or whether it had even lowered in the first place) but the stream banks are slowly recovering, likely a partial result of the check dams. Interestingly, about 5 camping parties noticed and asked about the reason for the invasion of lodgepole in the meadow. An encouraging sign of hiker awareness of the landscape and, of course, the classic Teachable Moment to talk about meadow dynamics.

Recent work by [REDACTED] suggests that lodgepole invasion is the result of pulses of decade-long warmer temperatures in meadows over the last 100 years which allow lodgepole to become established. The pulse I mapped at McClure (4 to 6 foot tall lodgepoles about 15 - 20 years old) matches a similar pulse found throughout the central Sierra that began in the early 80s and peaked in the mid-90s. The other pulses occurred in the early part of the century and another from about 1925 to 1940 or so. In Evolution Valley, the latter time period seems to correspond to fairly even-aged trees extending back about 200 feet from the current meadow boundaries as well as filling areas between the series of meadows extending from Darwin Creek to Colby Meadow.

Another critical – and generally unrecognized – component of the ecology of McClure is the amount of wetland present. In September of this year, I mapped the boundaries of areas that either had standing water

[REDACTED]

outside of the river channel or that I knew had standing water for at least 2 months of the summer (even in a major drought year). Wetlands comprise about 5 acres (~20%) of the total area of McClure Meadow.

This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> year that Mallards nested at McClure – both times near the pond at the west end of the meadow. The meadow had been closed to stock grazing this year as part of the new grazing rotation plan. There are no other records of Mallards nesting in McClure in the past. The wildlife database shows a parkwide total of 38 records of Mallard sightings with young – four of those in the Greater Evolution Co-prosperity Sphere. The records do not reflect whether the ducks were nesting, only that young were observed with the adults. In 1994, though, I did see a nest at Evolution Meadow. We also found an unsuccessful nest in Colby meadow this year. The nest was located about 4 feet from the access trail to the stock camp on the south side of Colby Meadow. Three sandpipers nested in the McClure area this year and 2 last year.

There was a stock camp located on the south side of the river at the west end of the meadow. This was apparently closed and partially rehabilitated by a previous ranger. This year, though, several hiking groups camped there and reestablished a fire ring. Another stock camp seems to have been established well back in the trees, also on the south side of the river. Both are adjacent to a pond and extensive wetland where the Mallards, several sandpipers and a red winged blackbird have nested.

### **Colby Meadow and stringers to Darwin Creek**

The main Colby Meadow is similar to McClure in species composition. Lodgepole encroachment is extensive in parts of the meadow (~15% to 20% of meadow, though I didn't map and measure it as I have McClure). There is a small wetland on the south side of the river just as it enters the meadow (perhaps < 2% of the meadow). There are 2 small side stream channels on the north side of the river in the meadow – one of which is an overflow channel from the main river. The camp site most often used by stock groups is mid-meadow on the south side of the river. Bare ground in the immediate area of that campsite has room for about 3 tents or so. Animals are usually tied on a small hill about 100 feet east of the camp. Colby had almost no grazing this year. Though several stock parties camped there this year, the animals tended to drift to the stringers up canyon when released and didn't significantly graze the meadow itself. Animals did, though, begin what appears to be a new roll pit on the north east part of the meadow. (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Two Sandpipers nested in the main meadow this year. This is about average for that meadow. In early July, we found what was likely a Mallard nest with 6 broken eggs. As noted in the discussion above on Mallard nests, this is extremely unusual.

The 3 or 4 stringer meadows in the 2 miles between Colby and Darwin Creek received light to moderate grazing. Even in a drought year, they remained fairly lush and resilient relative to the level of stock use they received (difficult to estimate per meadow since the animals didn't seem to stay in any one meadow, but drifted through).

There is a long-used campsite where Darwin Creek joins Evolution Creek, about 200 feet below where it crosses the JMT. Commercial stock groups use this site because a number of them are packing walking parties who want to camp at Evolution Lake. The packer takes the group up there, then returns to Darwin Creek to camp where the animals can graze. In both 2006 and 2007, about 5 parties followed this pattern. The site is heavily impacted by stock with a bare ground impact zone of 100 feet or so out from the campfire. The tie-up area is not well defined and several parties not contacted by me tied up too close to water and the campsite, leaving manure in and very close to the camp.



**Figure 4: Trampling & shearing of stream banks, Darwin Creek Camp**

Stock use recommendations for the Darwin Creek camp ask packers to discourage grazing in the wetland area immediately adjacent to the campsite. I doubt any of the packers are aware of this requirement nor have we (rangers) come up with an effective way to enforce it. As a result, this has not been working and the area where the two streams meet has received heavy impacts consisting of stream bank shearing, churning up of mud and marsh vegetation and urine and manure in and close to the stream there.

Impact clearly needs to be mitigated here but it needs to be done without also increasing impacts to the meadow or wetland areas of Colby and, especially, McClure. Asking

packers to use either meadow instead of Darwin is not an especially easy alternative because it would add an additional two or four miles of travel to packers taking their clients up to Evolution Lake and returning with their stock. In addition, most of these parties continue on to Big Pete which is a long day even from Darwin, without adding even more mileage to their day.

Although there is no question of the impacts to the wetland at Darwin creek, mitigation efforts should not simply move the problem elsewhere. McClure, especially, has much more extensive wetlands and is vital bird habitat. Instead, I think an initial mitigation ought to be to establish a high line for stock users about 50 feet east of the campfire. The line can be moved periodically as impact becomes too much for one area. A small sign outlining minimum impact stock regulations should be posted and include directions that packers should lead their animals 200 feet west to the small moraine and release them there, out of the wetland and close to the next stringer meadow.

### **Campsite Inventory**

We continued the campsite inventory project. We completed McGee Canyon, Evolution Lake and Emerald Lake. All showed significantly fewer campsites than the first survey. The sites recorded this year showed less impact (e.g. smaller in size, fewer scars, firepits or improvements) than 30 years ago.

### **Water Quality**

(b) (6) of UC Davis came through again this season, continuing his extensive water quality sampling (mostly for *e-coli*). He specifically found no coliform in the stream immediately adjacent to the station. (b) (6) pointed out that the lower three of the Darwin Lakes chain, where hikers often camp, have extensive algae growing near the shore. The same is true at almost all alpine lakes that have heavy use: Evolution Lake, Rae Lakes, Charlotte Lake etc. It is not as usual, though, to see such extensive algal growth in lakes which have few campers (Figure 5).





**Figure 5: Extensive algal growth, outlet of Evolution Lake (left). Algae and “suds”, outlet of Evolution Lake (right).**

As a result of education efforts by wilderness rangers and permit issuers, it is rare to find people who still use soap in streams or lakes – I talk to maybe two or three per season. It is still very common, though, for visitors to rinse their clothes in the stream every day or two.

## Wildlife



**Figure 6: Lunch time for snake? Photo on right 3 days later at Darwin Creek.**

## Beldings

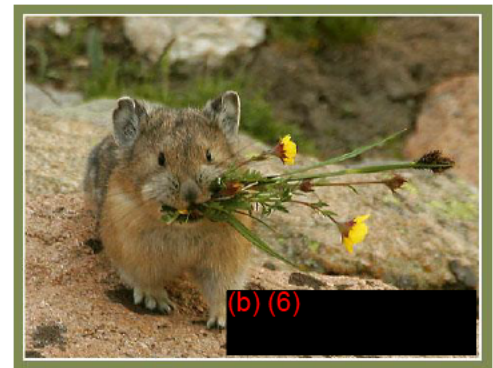
I believe I’m the only person concerned about Belding Ground Squirrels... how do we know when some critter population is crashing? As I did last year, I again note how few Belding ground squirrels are present in McClure Meadow, as well as their total absence from any other meadows in Evolution Valley, where

they were formerly reported. This year there were no more than 6 individuals. Although a few were seen early season at the meadow in front of the main campsites and the closed camp in front of the ranger station, they seem quickly to have relocated to the east end of the meadow. Food gathering may have been severely affected by the common presence of two Goshawks and a Marsh hawk, who all stayed well into September. In the early 80s, I remember at least a dozen or more beldings throughout the meadow, with many using burrows directly in front of the center-meadow camps. As mentioned last year, they are present in fairly good numbers at the “Pavilion Dome” meadows; the meadows on the west and north side of Evolution Lake; and the small meadow at the first pond where the trail tops out going up to Darwin Canyon. They also seemed to be well established in Dusy Basin.

Our wildlife database does not allow us accurate snapshots of a population’s dynamics or its relative numbers in a given area. We note only a critter’s presence, not if it’s common. I propose that we add a field to the database using the same criteria found in the Grinnell survey: Very Common, Common, Locally Common, Uncommon, Rare. We define each category on number of sightings a ranger might have in a given geographic zone in a defined time period. Apparently a similar scheme was considered by Resources, but not adopted. I believe it’s critical we adopt it. We might also consider doing a couple of “Wildlife Days” each season: record ALL wildlife seen on certain days.

### **Pikas**

I made a fairly serious effort to find them in Goddard Canyon, where they had been previously reported years ago. Last year I didn’t find any. This year I heard one just below the middle Goddard bridge.



### **Birds and other critters**

It was an early and good year for raptors: Goshawks (2, likely nested at McClure), Marsh Hawk, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle and Red Tailed. Several were present in early July and stayed through September. A juvenile Saw-Whet showed up at the station one evening and came close to the barbeque. The next morning, it was found dead by the campfire.

I have noted the presence of two Mallard nests. One successful at McClure and one unsuccessful at Colby. It’s possible, though, that predators took all the ducklings of the McClure nest. We saw none after early September.

A domestic pigeon with a leg band also showed up and stayed for a couple of days. Interestingly, when it flew over the meadow, the beldings gave their “hawk” alarm call. A guy who had once raised pigeons said they often showed up well off course when released by homing pigeon raisers.

I also found a small pine marten near the Goddard Bridge, in the river. It was missing its head and one foreleg. Couldn’t tell what had taken the head and leg, but it was fairly cleanly gone. We also saw a bear on the south side of McClure. There was bear sign all summer – torn up logs, scratched trees and scat, especially in upper Goddard. There were no reports of the bear bothering campers. This is fairly common in the Evolution area. I have often run into bear sign up on Darwin Bench, west of 11,106’.

In mid-September, we found evidence of a fresh deer kill at Darwin Creek, most likely by a mountain lion. There was blood and a gut pile by the stream and sign that the kill had been taken across the stream, where we lost the trail. Tufts of hair in the area were from a deer. Two weeks earlier, Sylvia had caught a glimpse of an animal at Evolution Meadow that she thought might have been a lion.

## **Trails**

The trail crew came in early August and was able to do some serious and much appreciated work, especially on the section between Evolution Meadow and Goddard Bridge. Some huge steps were reduced, making travel easier for hikers. A logging crew also got into the area by the 20<sup>th</sup> or so of June and was able to take out about a dozen trees that had fallen over the winter.

In late August I did a brief survey of the proposed reroute of the Hell For Sure Pass trail. Because of thunderstorms, I was unable to cover the whole route, but got about half way up. The existing trail is in truly bad shape. I don't believe it's received any maintenance at all in the 30 years I've been in the park, so it's not unreasonable that something should be done.



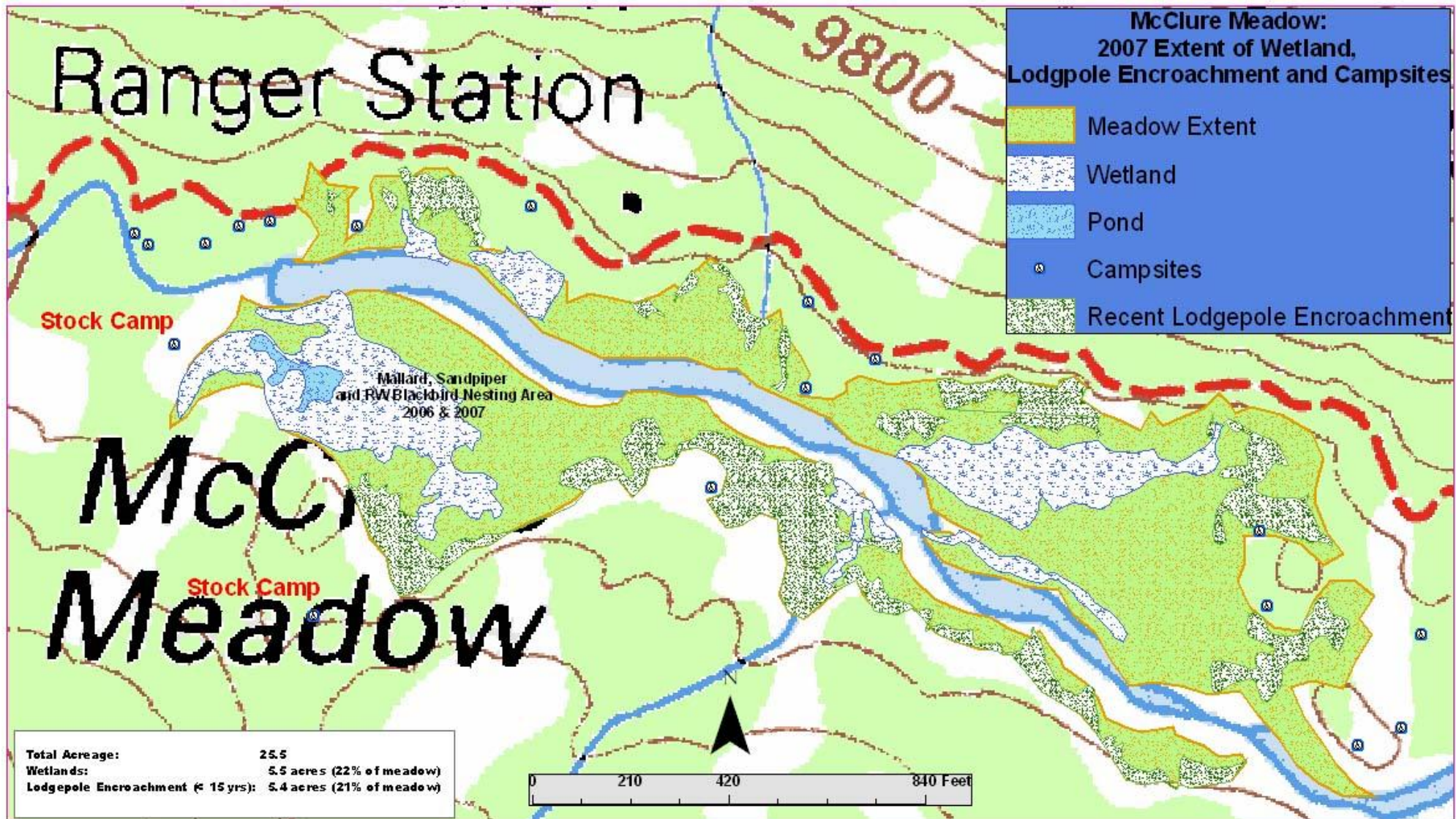


Figure 7 McClure Meadow: Campsites, Wetland and Lodgpole Encroachment (2007)



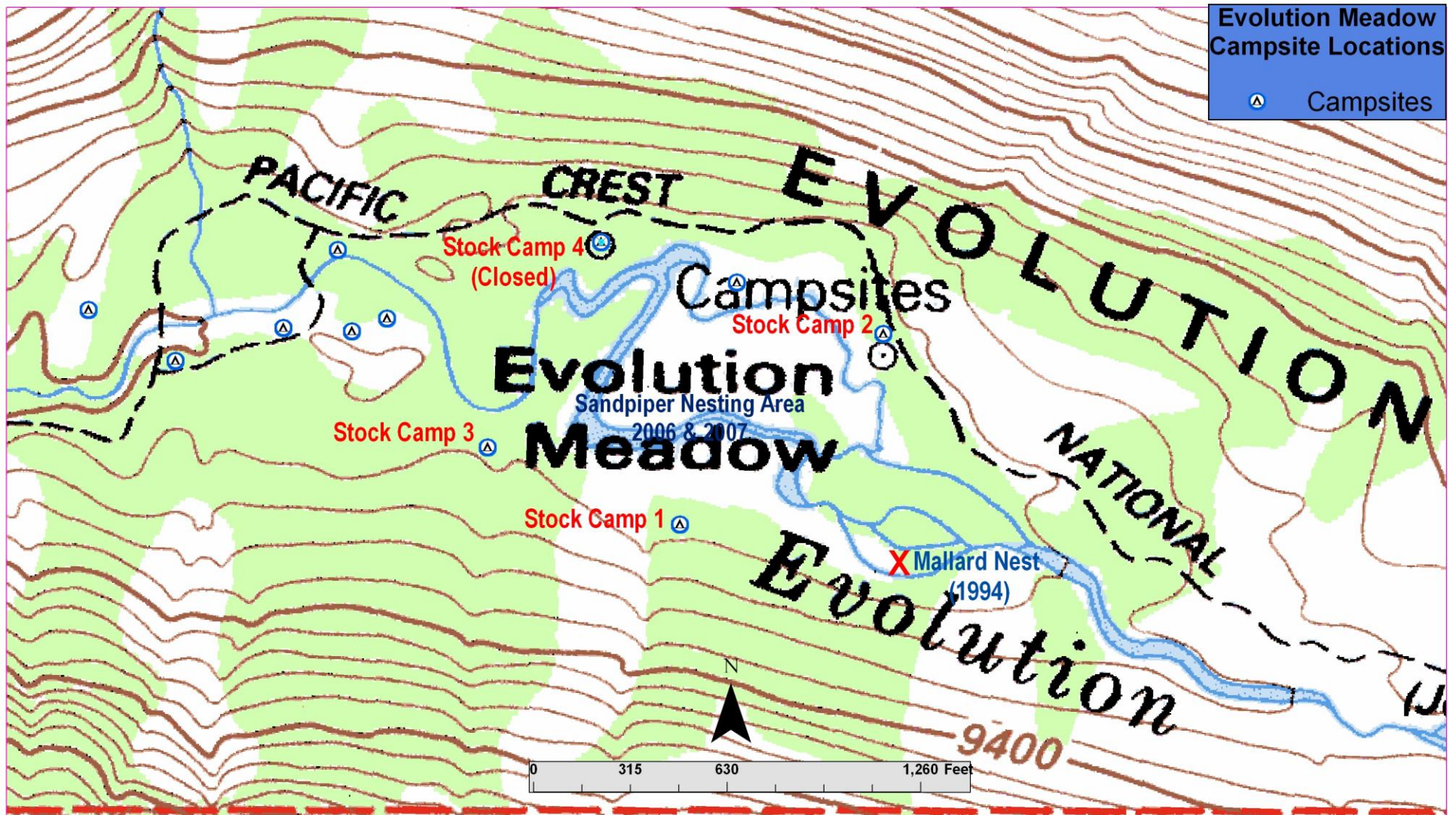


Figure 8 Evolution Meadow: Campsites

## Recommendations

1. Evaluate the stock camp location(s) at McClure. A possible alternative stock site is at the far east end of the meadow on the north side of the stream.
2. I once more recommend closing McClure to stock grazing.
3. At the commonly used stock camps in Evolution Valley (Darwin Creek; Colby Meadow, south side; McClure Meadow, north east end of meadow in trees (proposed); and Evolution Meadow, Stock Camp 4 – north west end of meadow (to be reopened)), determine the best places for stock to be lined out and put “tree saver” lines at those places. The lines would be provided by NPS and put up and taken down each season.
  - a. Signs should also be considered at each camp reminding stock users to rake out their manure; keep animals 100 feet from camp etc..
  - b. At Darwin Creek, a sign would also remind stock users to walk their animals 100 feet down to the first moraine and release them there to avoid damage to the wetland adjacent to the camp.
4. Add a field to the wildlife database using the same criteria found in the Grinnell survey (e.g. Very Common, Common, Locally Common, Uncommon, Rare) to provide data to more quickly determine relative population health of park species.

# Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park



## Wilderness Ranger End of Season Report

From: Rick Sanger, Pear Lake Ranger

Through: Chris Waldschmidt, Lodgepole Area Ranger  
Read and approved: /s/ Chris Waldschmidt Date: Oct. 26, 2007

Through: Sequoia District Ranger  
Read and approved: /s/ Gregg Fauth (acting) Date: Nov. 2, 2007

To: Gregg Fauth, Wilderness Coordinator  
Read and approved: /s/ Gregg Fauth Date: Nov. 2, 2007

# PEAR LAKE END-OF-SEASON REPORT

## SUMMER 2007

Ranger: Rick Sanger, ver. 9/28/07

### **Files auxiliary to this report** (on CD turned in with this report)

<b>End of season report.doc</b>	This document
<b>Daily Log.doc</b>	Daily log of activity
<b>Inventory.doc</b>	Pear Lake Cabin Inventory
<b>Stockuse.doc</b>	Report of stock parties
<b>Wildlife&amp;Pica.doc</b>	Wildlife observations and Pica sightings
<b>Status.doc</b>	Status of recommendations/projects made in past End Of Season reports

### **Contents**

Files auxiliary to this report (on CD turned in with this report) .....	2
Contents .....	2
Overview.....	3
Statistics:.....	3
Recommendation Summary.....	3
Visitor Protection & Service.....	3
Incident Details: .....	3
Lodgepole Permit Desk and Staff.....	3
Permit Availability.....	3
Resource Damage resulting from research equipment .....	4
Wilderness Protection.....	4
Group Use.....	4
Frog Research .....	4
Trail Maintenance.....	4
Heather Pit Toilet.....	4
Moose Lake Toilets .....	4
Campsite Rehabilitation.....	6
<i>Pear Lake</i> .....	6
Operations.....	6
Radio Communications .....	6
GIS Corrections .....	7
Please note suggestions to GIS database as follows:.....	7
Pear Lake Ski/Patrol Hut: .....	8
Maintenance Items.....	8
<i>Propane System</i> .....	8
Phoenix Composting Toilets (at Emerald and Pear Lake).....	8
Graffiti .....	8
Material Needs.....	8
Ranger Logs.....	8
Inventory.....	8
Needs .....	8
Clivus/Phoenix Toilet Needs .....	9
Patrol Routes, 2007.....	10

## Overview

Station staffed from June 23 to Sept 27. This was a very dry year, with the stream behind the cabin drying up the end of July. The supply of mice in the cabin was pretty good, I caught about 7 per week (ave) all season long.

### Statistics:

Month	Miles	Vis. Cntcts	Citations	Case Cards	EMS	SAR	Fire ring rehab
June/July	212	374	0	4	0	1	9
Aug	110	321	1	5	0	0	1
Sept	102	211	0	4	0	0	5
<b>Tot</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>

### Recommendation Summary

Old Issues (see STATUS.DOC) :

- There are cabin maintenance issues that should be addressed
- Trail Signs ordered are still not received
- The Emerald Solar Mount still needs to be repaired
- Trailhead Bulletin Boards need to be updated

## Visitor Protection & Service

### Incident Details:

EMS: 0

SAR: 1

LE: 1 cite party for improper food storage

13 Case cards: 3 for dog on trail, 2 for no permit, 2 for food storage, 2 for OB camping, 1 minor medical.

Numerous occasions for visitor education, including addressing “Outward Bound” and University groups with informal talks

### Lodgepole Permit Desk and Staff

Chad and Anna did an excellent job. They showed exceptional interest in the backcountry & motivation toward the job. They made an effort to familiarize themselves with the backcountry and to replace & update visitor information bulletin boards.

### Permit Availability

I have encountered several visitors who were unable to get to the permit desk before it closed at 4:30 pm. This was in large part due to long distance commutes to the park after work. These visitors were not able to “hit the trail” as they desired that night or early the next morning.

Evidently, the trailhead rangers have heard similar complaints both from visitors and the interpretive staff who told them of people looking for permits after the permit desk closed. I think it would be worthwhile to provide permits later into the evening. Perhaps this could be done by having one trailhead ranger start his/her

day at the desk before heading out on patrol, then another starting his/her shift later at the desk.

### Resource Damage resulting from research equipment

Damage to two trees has been documented resulting from hydrologic monitoring equipment mounted in trees. One tree is at Emerald Lake, and the other is at the top of Tokapah falls (wire crossing). Apparently, damage has occurred in the past, as well (tree scarring). A report (343) was created to document this, and given to Annie Esperanza to remedy. The damage is from “throttling” of the trunk by webbing, chain & cable used to mount equipment.

## **Wilderness Protection**

### Group Use

I encountered groups from Outward Bound, UC Santa Cruz and Sierra Club this year. All groups were in compliance with use permits. the UCSC group helped me with a major campsite rehab project (see below).

### Frog Research

(b) (6) visited the Tablelands early in the year. Unfortunately, he found no surviving Yellow Legged Frogs. He also reported that some samples taken from tree frogs last year showed the presence of the Chitrid fungus.

### Trail Maintenance

#### Trail work

Trailcrew was not present in the area, to my knowledge. The Pear Lake ranger cleared out a tree blocking access to the Emerald Lake camping area.

#### Heather Pit Toilet

A new seat was installed on the Heather Lake toilet by the trailhead staff. The floor was re-inforced and the walls rebuilt by the Pear Ranger.

#### Moose Lake Toilets

A joint effort between the trailhead staff, the local rangers and trails department resulted in the removal of the Moose Lake toilets and quite a bit of debris that had accumulated in that area. (there were two toilets: one was a large fiberglass tank and the other was a culvert on-end)





ABOVE: Moose lake toilet sites before work



During removal:



ABOVE: After work completion & rehab



## Campsite Rehabilitation

### Pear Lake

There is a place within 100 feet of the Pear Lake shore that has been used quite a bit in the past years, but is undesignated (illegal). Use of this site jumped mid-season to the point where I had to place a “restoration area” sign in the site, but even this didn’t help! I then recruited 15 campers from a UCSC orientation visit to help move large rocks into the area. The site has not been used since.



Above: After Rehab  
Right: UCSC students that were recruited to assist. “sled” for moving large rocks is held in center

## Operations

### Radio Communications

(b) (7)(F)

(b) (7)(F)



### GIS Corrections

Please note suggestions to GIS database as follows:

- 1) Southern boundary of Pear Lake Patrol region includes Alta Trail & Alta Meadow  
(see above map that differs from current database boundary)

## Pear Lake Ski/Patrol Hut:

### Maintenance Items

The cabin was found in excellent shape at the beginning of the season. Miles was a very conscientious & capable hutkeep. He also showed up at the end of the season to help with incoming supplies, the first time I've had a hutkeep do this. I found it very helpful to discuss a number of issues and felt that the meeting augmented quality of hut care.

### Propane System

The propane system installed last year developed some leaks during the winter. The leaks seem to be from not having tightened some of the crimp fittings enough. This has been corrected. Additionally, the flex lines outside were damaged by marmots. These were replaced with metal (unchewable) lines.

## Phoenix Composting Toilets (at Emerald and Pear Lake)

### Graffiti

Unfortunately, graffiti appeared in the Emerald Phoenix this year (for the first time).

### Material Needs

As listed below

## Ranger Logs

Original ranger logs were removed from the cabin this year with the intent to have them copied & archived. I removed 4 logs for the years 1978, 1979-1980, 1983, 1984. A fifth log was loaned to Jordon Fischer-Smith, and I believe it was dated 1981.

## **Inventory**

Please see INVENTORY.DOC file.

## **Needs**

adult nasal cannula	1 ea
wrist rocket rubber band	1 ea
BBQ-style lighter with long handle (for stove)	3 ea
dish gloves, large size	3 pair
burlap bags (gunny sacks) for hauling trash	8 ea
duct tape	1 rolls
large trash bags	about 10
Package of paper towels	2 ea
aaa batteries	10
AA batteries	24
Propane tanks for summer use (1.5 tanks)	
mouse traps (quick set kind w/plastic cheese)	8 ea

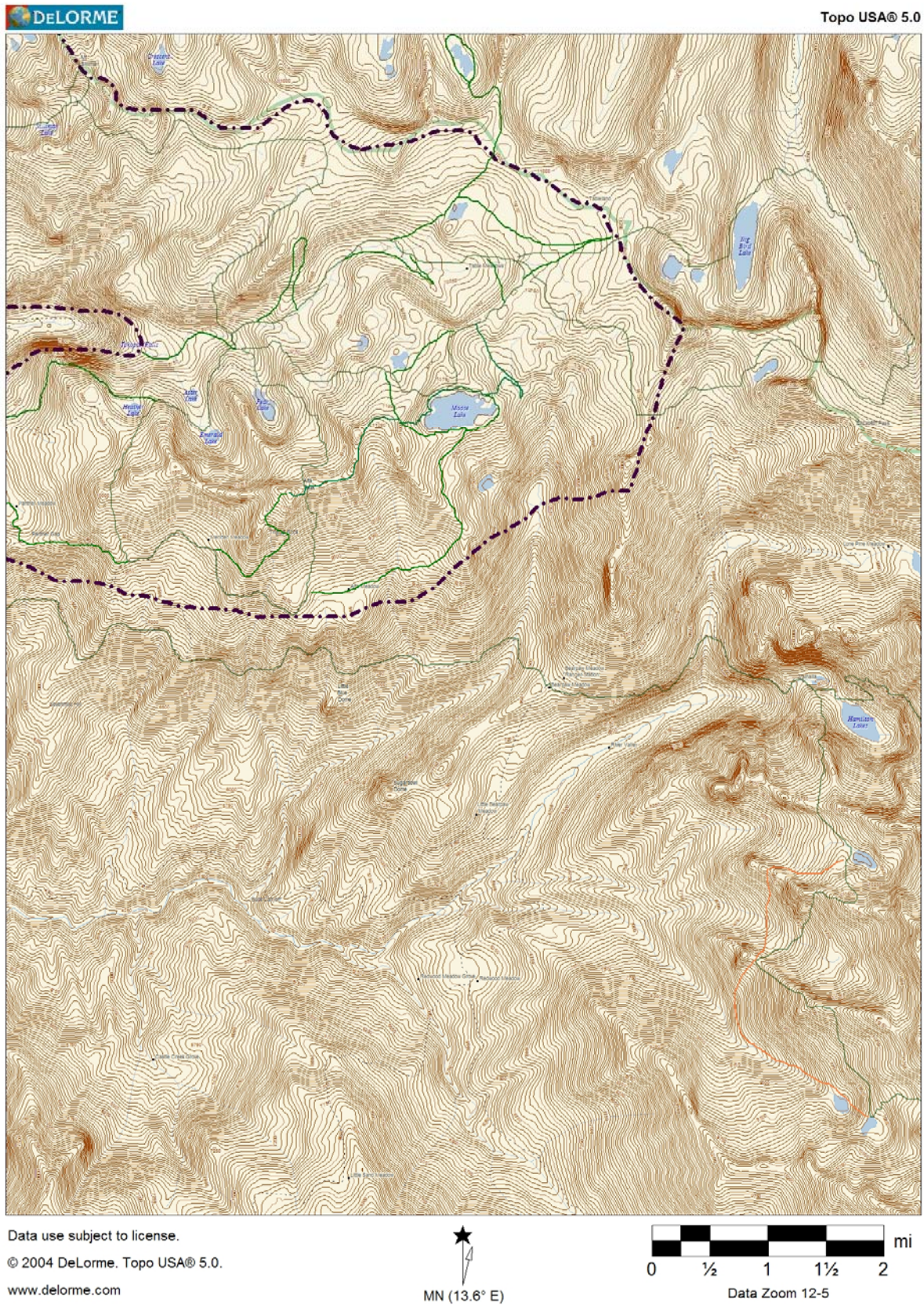
sweetwater filter (pump part)	
For Firehouse: floor wax, abrasive cleaning pwr, cleaning gloves, glass cleaner	

### **Clivus/Phoenix Toilet Needs**

distilled water for batteries	6 gallons needed (3 for each facility)
Mount for solar panel at emerald!	1 ea



## Patrol Routes, 2007





## **RAE LAKES 2007 SEASON END REPORT**

### **A. GENERAL SUMMARY**

My season as the Rae Lakes ranger started on June 12 when I hiked up Paradise Valley and Woods Creek. Immediately upon reaching Woods crossing at the John Muir Trail, I started meeting visitors. At that time, the only visitors on the trail were Pacific Crest Trail hikers heading north.

Many of the early season PCT hikers were very strong, doing more than twenty miles a day. They were from all over the United States, which made for interesting visitor contacts. This season was a lot easier for PCTers than last year was with late season snow.

After EMT training, I hiked back into Rae Lakes over Kearsarge and Glen Passes, arriving on June 26 to stay for the rest of the season. On arrival, I found all of my supplies secured in the cabin by (b) (7) Rex the Kings Canyon packer.

After settling in at Rae Lakes, I made patrols to many outlying areas: Sixty Lakes Basin, Woods Creek, Castle Dome Meadow, Baxter Lakes, Twin Lakes, Woods Lake, Kearsarge Lakes, and others.

I also climbed some of the mountain peaks, ridges and cross-country passes near Rae Lakes. Near the end of the season I switched areas with 3-1-3 and 3-1-6 and traveled over Forester Pass to Tyndall Creek, Crabtree Meadows and Whitney Portals. This trip was beneficial in re-familiarizing me with the areas to the south on the John Muir Trail and re-establishing contact with co-workers from other areas.

Rae Lakes is one of the most beautiful and interesting areas of these parks. Its popularity attests to this. From about July 15th until August 30<sup>th</sup>, the area was very busy. Often, more than fifty campers would be here on any given night, sometimes as many as One Hundred or more.

Most hikers entered the area from the following: Cedar Grove doing the popular Rae Lakes loop; Onion Valley (the closest entry point, 14 miles); or the John Muir Trail coming from both north and south. Some entered by the more remote east side passes: Sawmill, Baxter, and Taboose. A few entered by rugged cross-country passes: Dragon and Gould Passes, and also from the west through Gardiner Basin.

The Rae Lakes ranger station is located in a convenient location for both the visitor and the ranger. The station overlooks the peninsula and isthmus area where about 85% of the campers seem to congregate. (b) (7) and I agree this area offers the largest area of good camping areas and if the visitors want to camp here, we should let them. The advantages of this are that other areas have little or no impacts. I'll discuss this more later under camping conditions.

Working this area is very stimulating for the ranger because there is always something going on with respect to the visitor and how they are doing: Are they healthy? Do they need a minimum impact talk? What can I do to assist their needs? Is a law enforcement contact necessary?

This season the park was fortunate to have the California Conservation Corps working Kearsarge and Glen Passes. The leadership of this crew was outstanding. Park leaders Adam and Agnes and corps leader Kiva are some of the most dedicated and hardest workers in these parks. Not only do they teach the corps members the skill of their craft, they also all live together for three months and act as supervisors and counselors to twenty young adults. Their camp always had something positive going on in the way of fun activities for all members after the work was done. Praise also goes to Kim, the cook, who did an outstanding job with kitchen and camp, her job probably being the most difficult of all.

After August 30<sup>th</sup>, visitor use decreased, but there was still a steady stream of John Muir Trail and Rae Lakes loop hikers, at least fifteen to twenty per day, until the end of my season September 26<sup>th</sup>.

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, a cold storm front with wind driven snow caught several visitors unprepared. I helped them brace for the storm and hiked six of them down to snow line at Baxter Creek the next day so they could exit the mountains at Cedar Grove. The Rae Lakes shelter was inadequate. I will discuss this later. The storm lasted three days with approximately six to eight inches of snow. The day following the storm, John Muir Trail hikers continued coming through in spite of the harsh conditions. These storms made for a nice closing to the season.

## **B. VISITOR SERVICES**

### **1. Statistics**

	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Visitor Contacts</b>	122	518	1015	386	2041
<b>Miles Patrolled</b>	89	230	281	222	822
<b>Stock Use</b>		2 private	5 commercial	1 commercial	8

**Day Hikers:** Few to none at Rae Lakes and a couple to Glen Pass from Onion Valley

**Use Patterns:** Rae Lakes loop hikers are the largest visitor group at Rae Lakes. John Muir Trail hikers and hikers going out and back from Onion Valley are the second most common group. Others entering from the various east side passes are the third most common group.

## 2. Law Enforcement Incidents:

Having a ranger stationed at Rae Lakes helps prevent violations. There were no illegal fires at Rae Lakes this summer, although I found remains of someone's burned trash at Arrowhead Lake late in the season. The most common infraction was camping on vegetation. I dealt with this situation by asking the visitors to move their camp – and they always willing did so.

One visitor reported a dog going over Glen Pass on the John Muir Trail. I reported this to 3-1-3 at Crabtree Meadows and he was able to issue the visitor a citation.

## 3. Search and Rescue

Date	Location	Type	Evacuation
5-Jul	Rae Lakes	head trauma	helicopter
18-Jul	Rae Lakes	chest pain	helicopter
7-Aug	JMT/Sawmill Jct.	altitude illness	helicopter
8-Aug	Rae Lakes	systemic edema	treat & release
18-Aug	N. side Glen Pass	broken ankle	helicopter
1-Sep	Rae Lakes	twisted knee	helicopter

**Other Search and Rescue incidents:** I met one overdue hiker reported by 4-1-1 while I was doing trail work in front of the ranger station. Another search involved a Boy Scout troop with two missing members. I hiked to Vidette and Junction Meadows to find out the whereabouts of the missing hikers. After determining that they were on their way to Cedar Grove, I notified Roads End of their location. 4-1-4 met with them and gave them a talk about the errors of their way.

## 4. Service Incidents

The ranger at Rae Lakes has a lot of opportunities to assist visitors in many ways: weather reports; broken equipment (boot repairs, etc.); extra food, trail, route and climbing information; general area information of importance to the visitor; and relaying information through dispatch. We informed visitors in this manner when the fires broke out on the eastside in July, and visitors came to our stations for information on trail closures during this time. 3-1-9 and 1-1-6 were holding visitors back for a short while until the Forest Service re-opened the road and trail to Onion Valley.

## 5. Ranger Station

- Keeping the old structure operational was not a problem until after Labor Day. When the weather turned cold, it was difficult to keep warm enough, and when the cold snowstorm hit, the cabin was inadequate for both the rangers needs and to assist distressed visitors. Wind driven snow almost

blew the cabin (tent) down, and if it had, it would have been a dangerous situation for both the ranger and the visitors.

- The solar system is working well.
- The wood and propane stove are in good working order, but one new six-inch section of stovepipe is needed if the same system is used again next year.
- Rodents can easily enter the cabin and are a continuing problem.
- Next season a new pit toilet needs to be dug.
- The cabin is in very shabby condition, definitely not to NPS standards, and needs to be replaced.

## **C. WILDERNESS PROTECTION**

### **1. General Resource Conditions**

**Camp Areas:** With the Rae Lakes area so popular, there are two problem areas that need continuing attention: Woods Creek Junction and the Rae Lakes peninsula area.

The Woods Creek Junction has always had heavy use because it is the last camping area before heading up the long hill to the Rae Lakes Basin. The area needs regular patrols to pick up surface litter, to re-habilitate fire-rings, and to bury any toilet paper that appears. I made my last patrol here on September 7<sup>th</sup>

I discussed the toilet situation with 5-5-1 and 1-1-1, and it seems the best solution is to keep up with regular patrols and bury any toilet paper. There is a toilet on the other side of the river from the main camp, 150 yards from the sign on the John Muir Trail. If we put a sign here indicating where the toilet is, perhaps those visitors wishing to use it would do so. This might also encourage some people to camp on the north side of the crossing and eliminate some of the over-crowding on the south side - two or three decent sites exist here. I believe this would be a worthwhile experiment to see if it helps eliminate some of the over-crowding and impacts to the area. This sign could be on its own post or attached to the existing sign post at the junction.

The peninsula at Rae Lakes is a heavily impacted area with a lot of very good sites for camping. It requires regular patrols to pick up litter and to contact the many campers that frequent here. As mentioned before, even though there are many other options for camping at Rae Lakes, most visitors end up here. Sometimes it looks like a city near the storage locker. Even though visitors have canisters they still like to camp at this location. One possible solution is to put a sign up for the south bound hikers as they enter the basin asking them to try to avoid this over-crowded area and to camp at one of the lower of the three Rae Lakes.

Many other areas offer good camping: Sixty Lakes Basin, Baxter Lakes, Woods Creek, Woods Lake, Twin Lakes, Dragon Lake, and many areas along the John Muir Trail. These areas are not over used and do not present any problems.

**Drift Fences:** The Baxter drift fence needs some repairs; it still works, but is getting a little loose and ragged. The other drift fences are in good repair: Castle Dome, Woods Creek, and White Fork.

**Food Lockers:** All food storage lockers are in good condition in this area.

## **2. Meadow Management**

Meadows opened early this year. The meadows at Castle Dome, Baxter, and Woods Creek received a lot of use this season. By late season, these meadows were all grazed to the point of having little or no feed left. I informed 1-1-1 and 9-2-30 of this. 9-2-32 came through in September to complete the biomass survey with me. He agreed that these meadows were utilized to the maximum extent by season's end.

Junction Meadow and East Lake meadows also received maximum use. Cedar Grove Pack Station was the main utilizer of these meadows.

## **3. IBP/Concessions**

Rock Creek Pack Station came through the area three times and High Sierra Pack Station twice. Both of these pack stations supported John Muir Trail hikers that camped in the Rae Lakes Basin. All stock was held down at Baxter creek, with the exception of (b) (6) (HSPS), who fed his animals feed at Arrowhead Lake. Both of these pack stations and supported groups did a good job with their camps and animals, and continued over Glen Pass to the Whitney area.

## **4. Signs**

All signs in the area are in good condition. The John Muir Trail sign at the 60 Lakes junction was removed and needs to be replaced. It was reported twice that hikers went the wrong way at this spot.

## **5. Bears**

There were no bear incidents at Rae Lakes this season. A visitor reported a bear sighting, and I saw signs (footprints and scat) later in the season.

I reported three failures of the new Earth Sack: one at Vidette Meadow, one at Woods Creek, and one east of Kearsarge Pass.

## **6. Wildlife Observations**

I spotted bighorn sheep three times this season. Visitors and CCC crewmembers also observed bighorns at Rae Lakes, 60 Lakes ridge and near Kearsarge Pass. I saw eagles three times this season, one on my last evening at Rae Lakes flying low over the Lakes near dusk. I also observed several coyotes at Rae Lakes.

## **7. Resource Impacts/Issues (already addressed above)**

## **8. Resource Projects**

I repaired a difficult section of trail near the ranger station with some outside wall, rock removal, and two check steps. I also built four steps going down to the spring at the ranger station.

## **9. Fire-rings**

All fire-rings in the area (packer camps along Woods Creek, above Castle Dome Meadow, and Woods Crossing) have been re-built. I did this by removing all existing ash, rocks and debris, and re-building a neat, low profile fire-ring in place of the old one. It seems that the commercial groups using the same camps over and over should be doing more of this. This would help prevent some problems like we had at East Lake (visitor cut standing tree) late in the season.

Total # fire-rings removed or re-habilitated: approximately 40

## **10. Campsite Conditions (already addressed above)**

I completed the campsite inventory at Dragon Lake for Bob Kenan and Sandy Graben.

## **D. RECOMMENDATIONS (for discussion see text above)**

- Install toilet sign at Woods Junction
- Replace missing John Muir Trail sign at 60 Lakes Junction
- Replace old tent with new cabin at Rae Lakes
- Continue monitoring isthmus, peninsula, and Woods Junction

## **E. EQUIPMENT NEEDS: One section six inch stove pipe, two propane tanks, two boxes fire logs**



## **INVENTORY**

### **Kitchen**

- utensils: forks, knives, spoons, and basic kitchen supplies – adequate amounts and condition
- 4 sets plates and bowls
- 4 cups
- mixing bowls - 1 large, 1 small
- 1 vegetable grater
- 3 baking pans
- 2 cast iron pans – 1 12-inch pan, 1 6-inch pan
- 1 Teflon fry pan
- 1 stainless steel pressure cooker
- 1 cast iron griddle
- 1 stainless colander
- 1 Coleman oven
- 1 heating stove- pipes in poor condition

### **General**

- 2 Knaack Boxes
- 2 military green boxes
- 2 old climbing ropes
- 1 tool Box/w tools of all general types
- 1 limbing saw
- 1 cross cut saw
- 1 shovel
- 1 Pulaski
- 3 galvanized buckets
- 2 large tents
- 1 Clip Flashlight tent
- 1 Thermarest pad
- 1 Coleman gas stove
- 1 Coleman gas cylinder stove (w/8 cylinders)
- 1 fold up table
- assorted first-aid materials
- 3 oxygen cylinders

### **Solar**

- 1 panel
- all charging equipment
- 1 charged radio battery

## **SIGNS NEEDED**

One new sign for 60 Lakes Junction: “JOHN MUIR TRAIL  
←SOUTH NORTH→”

YEAR-END REPORT  
ROARING RIVER RANGER STATION

2007

Cindy J. Wood

6-6-07 to 9-30-07

I was on duty at the Roaring River Ranger Station from June 28, 2007 to September 29, 2007.

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS - STATISTICS

During the season, I patrolled 665 miles of trail. I patrolled 505 miles on stock and 160 miles on foot. I contacted 988 visitors this season. (568 Backpackers, 46 Dayhikers, 49 Hunters, 136 NPS, 3 FS, 55 visitors, 15 Day Riders with 20 head of stock, 101 Stock Users with 218 head of stock, 15 Administrative Stock users with 114 head of stock, 0 Burros, 0 Llamas and 0 cows were seen inside and Park this year.

There were no arrests or citations this season. Verbal warnings and Education for: Bears and Food storage. Use of Bear Boxes, Trash left in fire pits or the bear boxes. Education on proper stock camping methods, highlines for stock, meadow grazing rules, fishing and camping rules. Historic Preservation talks and information and Leave No Trace talks.

FIRST AID ASSISTS, MEDIVACS AND SARS

First aid assists included: blisters, splinters and scrapes.

Stock first aid assists included: ropeburns, scrapes and colic.

Visitor Assists: Shelter during rainstorms; food for hungry hikers, tent used by drenched hiker after the storm, feminine products, phone calls made through dispatch for late hikers.

SAR One BSA Leader was flown out of Ranger Meadow with a hurt ankle. 516 responded from Grant Grove. A Sierra Club group with a SAT phone called for help.

WEATHER SUMMARY

It was a very dry winter and there was no snow left on the passes. Meadows were dry early and Roaring River was extremely low at the end of June! We did get two periods of rain during the summer and a light snow near the end of September.

## B. USE PATTERNS

Trails were dry and open and creeks were low by the end of June. There were very few trees down after the light winter and meadows opened on the dry schedule. Some people came into the area in June, but most waited until the end of July and early August. Private stock use was lower than average. The fall was warm, with one weekend of snow during the opening of rifle season.

Most groups hiked through the area in late August and early September. There were many people hiking from Lodgepole, through Sugarloaf and over Colby Pass to hike up Mt. Whitney. Many people said they had used the new Sequoia Shuttle from Visalia. Some used the shuttle so that they could leave their vehicle at a different trailhead and hiked out of Lodgepole. This may change use patterns in the future.

Fall hunting patrols by vehicle and horse with Kurt Gross, 5 1 8. Talked to hunters, private land owners, hikers, folks at the Horse Corral Pack Station and along the road. We patrolled to Mitchell Peak on horse after a snow storm. Dave Schifsky (511) and I patrolled Kanawyer Gap and into Roaring River.

Aircraft: The Park Helicopter was in the area many times to work on the Palmer Repeater and the new narrow band adjustment.

### Commercial Use:

Cedar Grove Pack Station brought 3 trips into Roaring River. The north side of Avalanche pass is rough through the rock section, but passable to stock. They checked in with me on each trip and asked where they should stay and about trail conditions ect. They did very well.

Horse Corral Pack Station brought in a few trips(fewer than last year) to Roaring River, they usually checked in and let me know when they were in the area. They did more trips to Sugarloaf and Seville and Lost Lakes. They are also getting calls to take people in from Mineral King or to do resupplies in the Kern Canyon ect. Since there is no one running Mineral King Pack Station, Wolverton pack Station and Golden Trout Pack Station to the south doesn't seem to be doing many trips into the Park. It was a good season working with them.

Outward Bound, Three Quarter Round and many BSA and School groups hiked through. Most were well informed and did well.

## C. NATURAL RESOURCES

One rattlesnake was seen in Sugarloaf Valley. I saw 3 bears, 1 adult near Cement Table Meadow and 2 different cubs at Comanche Meadow. It was very nice to see no cows in the Comanche Meadow area this year. The (b) (6) family did not run cows again this year.

Meadows: It was a dry, very dry year. Meadows were ready to open on or before the dates, but care was needed to keep use scattered and not overuse any of the meadows. They did not grow as much during the summer and actually had a small growth spurt in August and had more moisture then. Everyone was very good about using meadows I suggested and use was moved around the entire area.

Meadow Monitoring: Meadows were monitored in September. Repeat photos were taken of many meadows and many more to do next season.

I packed in gear and food for the thistle removal crew, Sandy Graben for her Campsite Project and assisted Grant Grove Rangers on back-country patrols.

Roaring River and all the other creeks were extremely low, but all the main campsites had water. Some of the small creeks dried up and made hiking difficult coming in from Rowell Meadow area.

#### D. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Both Shorty's cabins were checked this year. The roof is almost gone off the Cloud Canyon cabin. The south side is very bad, the north side is ok. I layed the shakes over the biggest holes, to try and help it through the winter. The Moraine Cabin is about the same as last year, it had a double roof and the top layer is mostly gone.

The Barton-Lackey cabin and the Snow Survey cabin is in the same condition as last year.

#### E. BACKCOUNTRY FACILITIES

The ranger station came through the winter ok. The paint job looks good, but I still need the square corner pieces to replace and paint. The ceiling near the woodstove pipe still needs attention. The back ditch kept rain and water away from the back of the station and the solar system worked good this year.

I used 8 tanks of propane this season. There are 3 full medium size tanks at the station. There is one empty medium size tank at the R.O. at GG to be filled.

The pit toilet at the main backpacker camp needs a new seat and the seat and privacy fence needs to be rebuilt at the trailcrew camp.

The three bulletin boards at Ranger Lake, Lost Lake and Seville Lake should be replaced with new bulletin boards that could hold more information.

(b) (7)(E), (b) (5)

(b) (7)(E), (b) (5)



#### Drift Fences and Gates:

The Sugarloaf/Comanche drift fence needs the most work. The fence needs 17 posts cut and added, it needs 10 drop posts added at the trees. Perhaps the trail crew could help by cutting posts? This would help a lot. It would be a good volunteer project.

Moraine Drift Fence got the most work done on it...thanks Ryan!! 8 posts were reset and 4 added.

JR Pature fence needs to be extended. Trail Crew stock found a back way in and about 100 feet of fence needs to be repaired and added.

Lackey Pasture fence needs 6 posts reset or added along the north side.

The Grasshopper gate is in poor condition and the fence needs 4 posts reset.

Both Cement Table fences need new gate posts cut for the sliding rails. The trail crew needs to do this next year.(three are broken) Both fences need posts added.

The Austin camp fence is in fair shape, it needs 2 posts reset. The Austin/Groundhog fence has 4 trees fallen on the upper section and needs many posts and almost a full rebuild.

The Grand Palace fence needs clearing and 3 posts.

The Swinging Gate below the station is in good condition, the fence needs 4 posts.

The Wire Gate is in good condition.

The Grave Gate is in good condition.

The Lower Ranger drift fence needs a few posts added.

The Upper Ranger drift fence/gate is in fair shape, it needs 2 good 7 foot long rails.

The Sugarloaf gate needs 2 good long rails.

The Sugarloaf hitchrail was broken this year and needs to be rebuilt.

#### Signs:

Some trail junction signs could be combined on one post.



## F. TRAILS

It was a very light "tree" year....but quite a few fell during the season as the ground dried out. The new trail crew did a lot of ground work and cleaned all waterbars in the area. They did many small projects throughout the area. They left in mid August.

## G. CAMP AREAS

I cleaned 25 firepits this season and obliterated 6 pits.

Areas that would benefit from new food storage lockers: Comanche Meadow, Sugarloaf Meadow, Hilltop Camp, Hidden Camp, Ranger Lade and Seville Lake. Also Ranger Meadow, Dement Table Camp, Big Wet Meadow and the sliding box camp and the Ranger Station camp.

## H. PERMIT SYSTEM

There were no complaints about paying for permits. People were very well informed about Park rules in general.

## I. RECOMMENDATIONS

Replace the 3 bulletin boards at the 3 lakes.

Get Square pieces so I can replace them on the corners of the station.

Add caulking or a storm collar to the R.S. stovepipe. Add a water-proof junction box on the outside wall for the solar hookups.

Add a rustic wooden screen door to the front of the station.

Continue drift fence work, gate repairs and other project work.  
Repair hitch rails.

Historic Preservation of local cabins.

Thanks to everyone for all the help this season. Thanks Erin for hauling our stock to the Grant Grove Parade, and to all the ones who worked to make it possible.

(b) (6)

Happy Trails!!

....Cindy J. Wood  
October 8, 2007

2007

## J. INVENTORIES - Fall of 2007 at Roaring River Ranger Station

## Kitchen:

- 2 liquid soap dispensers
- 0 refill for above
- 1 1/2 large liquid laundry soap
- 1 1/4 large dish soap
- 1 1/2 small dish soap
- 2 scrub sponges
- 4 sponges
- 1 cleanser
- 1 window cleaner
- 4 spray bottles
- 3 green scrubbers
- 10 sos pads
- 2 metal trail crew scrubbers
- 1 large dish drainer and rack
- 1 extra small dish drainer and rack
- 1 murphy oil soap cleaner for wood walls
- steal wool
- 2 new dish washing tubs - plastic
- 1 old tub
- 3/4 Antifreeze for drains in fall
- 6 new hot pads
- 4 old hot pads
- 4 boxes kitchen matches

Roaring River Ranger Station - Store Room Inventory - fall of

- 3 gal. white gas
- 2 small white gas bottles
- 1 gal. bleach (old)
- 1 gal. glass cleaner
- 1 backpacker stove and cook pot
- 1 spare seat for directors chair
- 1 NPS bear cannister
- 4 Toilet paper
- 3 govt. paper towels
- 1 propane cannister lanterns
- 1 box small trash bags
- 1 Aladin oil lamp
- 1 gal. kerosene
- 1 two burner propane stove / 1 2 Burner white gas stove
- 1 small roll metal screen
- 1 roll fiberglass screen
- 4 pairs of leather gloves
- 1 med. size - North face pack
- 1 med. size - Gregory pack
- 1 can ant killer
- 1 case or more of MRE's
- 2 old 1 gal. water canteens
- 1 dresser
- 1 good director chair
- 2 folding camp chairs
- 2 fedco bladder bags
- 1 wooden long back board
- 1 old hard hat, 1 Newer Hardhat (need straps)
- 1 Oxygen bottles, 1 Regulator and Masks in orange rope bag / 1 Hard Case
- 4 new screens & 6 old screens for windows (1 O2 Red Case)
- 1 sponge mop (old)
- 1 white gas lantern (single mantle)
- 1 extra cross cut blade
- 1 six foot cross cut saw (historic?)

RRRS - Store Room Inventory continued

2007

Solar Set Up Includes

- 50 feet of 12 gauge wire
- misc. small parts/wire/1 electrical tape
- 1 extension cord
- 2 panels connects to Prostar 12
- 1 Ranger Lake panel added in '04 to Ranger Lake Prostar 20 controller (with romex wire and set out on big flat rock to west of RS)
- 2 XP 125 inverters(1 may not work?)(1 from Ranger Lake)
- 2 sunlyte gell batteries(old)
- 1

New charger & antennae  
For new Radios (06)

- 1 Alum. ice axe
- 1 snow shovel
- 1 50 ft. old gold line
- 3 lg. metal splitting wedges
- 1 sm. rock hammer
- misc. cable
- 1 100 ft. tape measure

Lumber

- 3 2x6x 3ft.
- 1 1x12x4 ft.

- 4 nose bags
- 2 old lead ropes
- 2 cans of Barley (5 bags)
- 1 full ~~large~~ can of Alfalfa pellets (2 bags)
- 4 small salt blocks
- 1 Electric fence kit
- 1 1/2 mineral block
- 1 bag of repair leather

INVENTORY IN BEDROOM CLOSET

- |                                   |                      |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2 extra mattresses/1 Rollaway Bed | 2 rain suits         |
| 4 bath towels                     | 1 rain slicker       |
| 2 therma rests                    | 3 new pillows        |
| 1 bivy sack                       | 2 old sleeping bags  |
| 2 smaller unknown tents           | 4 sets of new sheets |
| 2 new chair cushions for porch    |                      |

I left 4 tubs of food  
1 set shampoo/conditioner (Lg)  
1/4 oatmeal/almond liquid soap  
some food in shelves: spaghetti & noodles, olive oil & 1/4 reg oil  
and misc. to start with or pick up later.

## ROARING RIVER RANGER STATION - STOCK INVENTORY IN TOOL ROOM

1 full shoeing kit  
 1 shoeing chaps  
 1 new rasp  
 1 new nippers  
 1 scale  
 1 bell  
 2 mane combs  
 2 brushes  
 1 comb  
 1 hoof pick  
 1 set slings  
 1 leadrope snap  
 misc. keepers and leather items

## SHOES

3 size 2  
 6 size 1  
 6 size 0  
 6 size 00  
 4 size 000

0 box #5 city head nails  
 1 box of rivets & burrs

0 penicillin  
 5 syringes & many needles  
 4 vet wrap  
 1/2 gall salve  
 1 Fura zone  
 10 butte tablets  
 3 uniprim powder(exp. 10-07) 4 (08)  
 3 clear eyes  
 2 wonder dust  
 2 1/2 blue lotion spray  
 1 butte paste(exp. 3-06)  
 2 corona (1/3 full)  
 0 banamine paste  
 2 fly wipe concentrate  
 1 roll on fly wipe & 1 spray bottle  
 1 Epsom salts

## VET FIRST AID KIT IN ORANGE METAL BOX FOR THE TRAIL

1 corona ointment tube  
 2 uniprim powder(penicillin) exp. 2-06  
 1 banamine paste (exp. 12-05)  
 1 blue lotion spray  
 7 butte tablets (04)  
 5 gauze pads  
 1 vet wrap  
 1 field dressing  
 1 syringe  
 1 clear eyes  
 1 stretch gauze

## \* WISH LIST FOR STOCK:

1 banamine paste  
 0 butte paste  
 1 surgical scrub/sponges  
 0 CAMP salt (white)  
 0 lg BLOCKS mineral salt

1 set new Bridge Boxes  
 #5 City Head nails (12 Box)

2 mule snaps & 2 horse snaps  
 4 Bags Barley - COB  
 2 Bag Alfalfa Pellets  
 Shoes? 8-000 8-1

10-0

## ROARING RIVER RANGER STATION - TOOL ROOM INVENTORY

200.7

- 1/4 roll of smooth fence wire
- 1 gal. 50:1 mix (67)
- 1 small gas mix and 1 small bar oil for trail
- 1 1/4 gal. bar oil
- 4 2 stroke oil for mixing (50:1) (Stahl)
- some fence staples, but we need more!!
- 12 Please close gate signs with lag screws
- 8 misc. metal signs - old various
- old canvas tarps
- 1 plastic gas can/oil with old gas/oil
- 1 wash pan - metal
- 2 laundry/water buckets - metal (from ranger lake)
- 2 2 stroke gas mix for 32:1
- 1 wd-40
- 1 starting fluid
- 1 thread compound
- 1 bar tip grease gun - full
- misc. plumbing repair and parts
- 5/8 " hose repair connectors
- 1 lubricating oil

good assortment of washers, screws, nails, bolts, hook & eyes, ect.

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2 wooden handled pruners           | 1 thistle shovel                |
| 1 alum. pruners                    | 1 pulaski                       |
| 2 hedge trimmers                   | 1 mini sledge                   |
| 1 hatchet                          | 1 asphalt rake                  |
| 1 come-a-long                      | 2 carpenters saws               |
| 1 fence stretcher                  | 1 snow shovel                   |
| 1 drain snake                      | 1 post hole digger              |
| 2 collapseable stock rakes         | 1 small trail bar               |
| 2 fire shovels                     | 1 old broom / 1 new broom       |
| 3 old shovels                      | 1 brace with a few small bits   |
| 3 double bit axe                   | 1 carpenter square              |
| 1 splitting maul                   | 1 10" level                     |
| 2 sledge hammers                   | 3 large splitting wedges        |
| 2 hack saws & 1 doz. blades        | 1 keyhole saw                   |
| 1 smooth plane                     | 1 full can of clothes pins      |
| 4 colors of flagging               | 1 draw knife                    |
| 2 metal brushes (1 lg & 1 sm)      | 1 caulking gun (no caulk tubes) |
| 4 plastic chainsaw wedges          | 2 funnels                       |
| 2 chainsaw chaps                   | 1 paint roller & handle         |
| misc. files                        | 5 paint brushes                 |
| 2 extra large monkey wrenches      | 3 crowbars                      |
| 1 small military shovel            | 1 goggles                       |
| 1 old homelite saw - doesn't work? | 4 putty knives                  |
| 3 hammers                          | 1 tin snips                     |
| 2 new fence plyers & 1 old pair    | 2 vice grips                    |
| 3 plyers                           | 1 needle nose plyers            |
| 3 crescent wrenches (6", 8", 10")  | 1 channel locks                 |
| 1 Asphalt Rake                     | 2 Alum Sign posts               |
| 1 short Leaf rake                  |                                 |
| 2 Pick Heads / 1 Handle            |                                 |
| 2 McCloids                         |                                 |



07

RRRS - TOOL ROOM INVENTORY - continued

- 1 chisle
- 6 assorted straight screwdrivers
- 3 assorted phillips screwdrivers
- 2 scrench
- 1 length orange webbing
- 1 short handled leaf rake
- ① large grates for fire pit
- 2 small backpacker grills
- 1 old 50 foot black hose
- 2 new 75 foot blue garden hose & white & Blue Hose
- 1 mountain maytag
- 1 ringer
- 1 wash tub - square
- 2 round wash tubs(1 for water trough in JR Pasture)
- 1 anvil (New in '07!!) (Little Ranger)
- 1 pipe vise
- 1 wheelbarrow with hard rubber tire
- 1 20" Stihl Chainsaw, extra chain & oil mix (390) ('07)
- 1 new chaps (orange)
- Propane
- 3 med. tanks (Full)

ROARING RIVER RANGER STATION - First aid & Office supplies

- 1 red roll up first aid kit (very basic)
- 1 blood pressure cuff with NO stethoscope
- basic first aid supplies
- 2 Alcohol
- 4 Boxes AA Batteries
- 1 Large 1<sup>st</sup> Aid "Trail Kit" (orange Bag) ('07)
- basic office supplies
- ① empty box of lamination sheets (50)
- 1 steno pads
- ① white lined pad
- 4 orange fire pads
- 0 black govt. pens
- 2 1/2 roll duct tape
- 8 sun screen
- 1 hole punch
- 1 old "lost & found" form book
- 1 citation book
- 1 written warning book

many NPS info books, wildlife, mammal, reptile, birds, airplanes, flowers ect.

ROARING RIVER RANGER STATION .....WISH LIST..... fall of 2007

- 1 set new bridge boxes
  - 3 Materials for 3 bulletin boards
  - 1 Oral airway set
  - 1 Nasal airway set
  - 1 box Govt. black pens
  - 1 Govt. Calendar '08
  - 18 D Batteries
  - 1 1/2" faucet with threads
  - 5 pounds fence staples
  - 1 roll smooth wire
  - 1 3/4; shut off valve
  - 1 Brace and set of auger bits (up to 1")
  - 12 Spikes for hitch rails(10 or 12")
  - 1 (extra small) straight screwdriver for the solar system
  - 2 5 gallon square "hot water" cans from the warehouse
  - 20 large trashbags
  - 10 Gunny Sacks
  - 10 rolls TP
  - 2 Outhouse seats
  - 4 Lengths of webbing (20")
- Forms: AUO, Travel, Photo Log, Trail Register ect.

ITEMS TO TAKE BACK TO THE STATION - Spring of 2008

- Fire Extinguishers
- Oxygen Tanks (3)
- 1 new gallon of gas for Chainsaw
- Filters for Katadyn Filter System if needed(check with 111)
- SAT Phone, GPS?CAMER case



## Rock Creek 2007 Wilderness Ranger End of Season Report

From: Alison Steiner

Through: Erika Jostad, Kern Supervisor

Read and approved: \_\_\_\_\_ signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 10/25/07

To: Gregg Fauth, Wilderness Coordinator

Read and approved: \_\_\_\_\_ signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 10/30/07

# **End of Season Report**

Rock Creek Ranger Station  
June 23–September 21, 2007  
Alison Steiner



Miter Basin

## **A. General Observations:**

### **1. Statistics:**

Because I spent July 10<sup>th</sup> through July 22<sup>nd</sup> staffing the Kern Ranger Station, these numbers do not accurately reflect visitation to the Rock Creek area.

- Contacts:
  - Backpackers...approximately 1300
  - Day Hikers...approximately 125
- Stock:
  - Total Animals/Total Use Nights...130/approximately 160
  - Horses/Mules...124
  - Burrows...0
  - Llamas...6
  - Commercial...94
  - Private...6
  - Administrative...30

## 2. Law Enforcement/Citations:

Two citations were issued for violations in the Rock Creek area—the first to a group with a dog at Sky Blue Lake, the second to a hiker without a permit.

(b) (3) (B), (b) (7)(E)

As always, education proved the most effective means by which to handle law enforcement situations.



Dog at Sky Blue Lake (7/2)

## 3. Medicals/Transports:

There were only three medicals in the Rock Creek area this summer. One occurred in mid-June (before I had arrived) and was handled by (b) (3) (B), (b) (7)(E) Brian from the Construction Crew camped at Upper Crabtree Meadow. Brian initiated a helicopter evacuation of the PCT hiker, who was having gastrointestinal problems. This emergency response by a trail crew member highlights the importance of all backcountry employees to the park's search and rescue efforts.

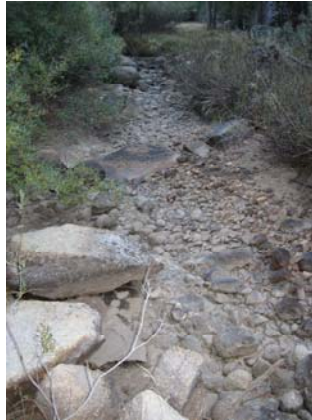
The other two medicals occurred on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and August 12<sup>th</sup>. The first medical involved a man who had dislocated his patella near the Siberian Pass/PCT junction, the other a man on the PCT (one mile beyond the park boundary) suffering from general fatigue, low blood sugar, and an irregular heartbeat. 3-1-1 and I evacuated the first patient by helicopter and encouraged the second to hike out with the assistance of his backpacking partners.

## 4. Searches:

There were no search and rescues in Rock Creek this summer.

5. Weather Summary:

Unlike last year, this summer was *extremely* dry. Low snow pack in the Kern (only 5% of normal) and a lack of precipitation between June and September limited meadow growth and caused creeks to dry mid-season. Thankfully, area springs continued to flow throughout the summer, providing visitors with a reliable source of water. The first snowstorm arrived on September 21<sup>st</sup> and dropped 6+ inches of snow on the Cottonwood Pass Trail.



Rock Creek, above (east of) Nathan's Meadow (9/17)

6. Fires:

Several fires (most outside of the park) produced smoke that settled within the district this summer. The Willow Fire—started by lightening strike on July 15<sup>th</sup> and burning 185 acres by September 22<sup>nd</sup>—was the only significant fire in the Kern.

B. Use Patterns:

1. Hikers:

Most backpackers in the Rock Creek area are headed for Mt. Whitney via either the PCT or Crabtree Pass. Miter Basin also receives significant weekend traffic (particularly from anglers).

Day-use is generally confined to Mt. Langley (where 30 to 50 people attempt to summit the peak a day). As has been recommended in the past, a cairned route up Langley would greatly reduce resource damage to this fragile alpine area.

2. Stock:

There was a significant decrease in overnight stock use in the Rock Creek area this season. Whereas Lower Rock Creek Crossing Meadow accumulated 358 nights of use last year, it received less than 100 this summer. I attribute this decline, in part, to the lack of winter snowfall. Rock Creek Pack Station, one of the area's most common commercial users, ran fewer trips in the district, possibly because they could access areas north of Rock Creek (in Kings Canyon



or Inyo National Forest) that are usually impassable due to snow. The trail crew's brief stay in the area (only three nights) also limited the number of use nights in Lower Rock Creek. Penned-Up Meadow received use comparable to that of last year.

Cottonwood Pack Station continues to run frequent day trips into Upper Rock Creek.

3. Administrative:

Rock Creek received a considerable amount of administrative use this year, the majority occurring in late July and early August. On July 31, Tom Burge and two volunteers assessed and officially documented the Rock Creek Ranger Station. On August 1, Sylvia Haultain, Erik Frenzel, and two volunteers began species composition in Upper Rock Creek. They completed this monitoring project on August 8. In early September, the military trip visited Rock Creek, staying at Lower Rock Creek Crossing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Penned-Up Meadow on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

The Sequoia Foundation's trip proved the most interesting administrative group in the Rock Creek area this summer. Foundation staff and several well known artists (such as Gary Synder and Tom Killion) arrived on July 31<sup>st</sup> and stayed at the Army Creek Junction for a week. While in the area, they took trips into the Miter Basin, down Rock Creek, and to the Siberian Outpost. I believe that this experience was inspirational and meaningful to both the artists involved and to the park employees who were able to spend time with the group. In the future, however, I think that the Foundation should work with the park to ensure both that they bring enough bear-proof containers for their food items (they were conducting 24 hour watches) and to pick a suitable campsite for their group.

4. Commercial:

I met several commercial outfits in the area this summer. Cottonwood Pack Station and Rock Creek Pack Station comprised the majority of commercial stock use. Mt. Travel Sobek, Southern Yosemite Mt. Guides, and Call of the Wild were the three hiking groups that I contacted.

5. Research:

The U.S. Army's Topographic Engineering Center sent researchers into the district this summer in an attempt to "perform high resolution mapping...using advanced LIDAR and optical sensors." This project proved troublesome for several reasons. First, reflectors were left (for several months) in high use areas such as Miter Basin, Crabtree Pass, and Mt. Langley. I frequently received comments from visitors regarding these research materials. Second, the reflectors were inappropriately and/or inadequately secured; some were glued to rocks (causing resource impact upon removal), others were held into the ground by flimsy tent stakes (meaning that animals were able to scatter them). Third, Erika Jostad had to press the researchers to return to the park to collect these materials. This situation illustrates how important it is for the park to require

researchers to abide by our wilderness regulations (leave nothing behind) and to consult wilderness supervisors about the feasibility of their plans.



Reflectors Left on the Siberian Outpost (9/12)

6. Aircraft:

Although military over-flights were common along many of the districts trail corridors and cross-country routes, low flying military aircraft were not. During my three months of duty, I reported only one low flyer. On July 9, a white and red (presumably) military aircraft flew over the Rock Creek Ranger Station (first south to north, then north to south) at approximately 1000 ft AGL. I believe that the park's efforts to improve relations with military representatives have significantly lessened low flying incidents (at least in the Rock Creek area).

C. Natural Resources:

1. Bear Activity:

Bears were present, but not particularly problematic, in the Rock Creek area this summer. Although a bear visited the station twice (knocking down the bear-proof trash barrel, ripping the screen door, and taking a bite out of the laminated ranger note), no visitors reported bear activity in the district's campsites. I attribute the reduction in bear reports to visitors' overwhelming compliance with new bear canister regulations. I met only two groups all summer that were not carrying bear-proof canisters.

2. Wildlife:

Coyotes, pine martens, weasels, bighorn sheep, and bobcats were all observed in Rock Creek this summer. In mid-August, I saw a coyote prowling the ranger station meadow, and on August 31<sup>st</sup>, one crossed the ridge near Army Pass. In September, I heard howls on Mt. Langley, Siberian Outpost, and about ¼ mile west of Rock Creek station. I spotted a pine marten playing in Rock Creek (only a hundred feet from the cabin) on July 9<sup>th</sup>, and 3-1-1 reported observing several on Army Pass on September 6<sup>th</sup>. I saw three young long-tailed weasels in the Lower Rock Creek stock camp on July 25<sup>th</sup> and an adult at Rock Creek Lake on August 4<sup>th</sup>.

The most interesting wildlife observations involved bighorn sheep and bobcats. Bill Tweed reported 19 ewes and lambs in the meadow above Upper

Soldier Lake on August 1<sup>st</sup>, and VIP Steve Nave saw seven in the same area on August 7<sup>th</sup>. Visitors continued to report bighorn sightings near Upper Soldier Lake throughout August and September. Over the course of the summer, there were also eight bobcat observations between Rock Creek and Crabtree (four by rangers or other park service employees). I spotted one on June 27<sup>th</sup> only ten feet from the ranger station, and Bob Meadows caught a glimpse of one near Rock Creek Lake on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

3. Vegetation:

Area meadows were shockingly dry due to a lack of winter snowfall. Thankfully, the reduction in grazing use this season left meadows in good condition despite the limited precipitation.

I noticed no exotic plants in the district this summer. However, I recommend that 9-2-30 survey the stock camp at Rock Creek Lake next year because invasive species have been found there in the past.

While staffing the Kern Ranger Station in mid-July, I participated in the removal of Velvet Grass. I spent approximately 10 hours pulling this invasive plant from both the ranger station meadow and Lower Funston.

D. Cultural Resources:

1. (b) (3) (B)

On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, (b) (7)(E), (b) (7)(F)  
On August 24<sup>th</sup>, Tom Burge (b) (3) (B)  
This incident is currently under investigation.

2. Historic Sites:

The only historic site in the district is the ranger station itself (built in 1949 by the Department of Water Resources). Tom Burge visited Rock Creek this summer in order to officially access and document the cabin's condition.

E. Backcountry Facilities:

1. Cabin:

Someone broke into the ranger station last fall/winter, destroying the new Sequoia wood door that was installed in 2006 and severely compromising the integrity of the cabin's porch. Thankfully, snow surveyors reinstalled the old plywood door when they discovered the problem in late January (most likely, the station had been standing open for several months). Supplies for a new door were sent into Rock Creek on the mobilization flight in June, and the door was installed in late September. Hopefully, the metal plate intended to cover the new door will solve what has become a chronic problem. An October patrol of the area may help determine who continues to use the cabin late-season. 3-1-1, 5-5-4, and I rebuilt the station's porch on August 13.

2. Signs:

All area signs remain in good condition.

3. Other Facilities:

3-1-4 and I setup the stock demonstration camp's highline on June 28<sup>th</sup> and the Rock Creek drift fence on June 29<sup>th</sup>. These were taken down on September 18<sup>th</sup> and September 19<sup>th</sup>, respectively. I rewrote the instructions for the highline's assembly and have attached them to this report. Highline materials are stored in a grain sack in the locked metal box outside the ranger station. No progress was made replacing the drift fence t-posts with wood. This project should be coordinated with the trail crew next year.

F. Trails:

1. Trail Activities:

The Kern Crew spent September 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in the Rock Creek area. During that time, they cleaned waterbars on the PCT as well as between Lower Rock Creek and New Army Pass. They also cut-out a foxtail pine that had fallen across the PCT near the west side of Siberian Outpost. Unfortunately, a large boulder was left blocking the PCT between Lower Rock Creek Crossing and Guyot Creek. Although the trail *is* stock passable, this problem spot should be prioritized next year in order to avoid trail compromise.



Boulder Blocking the PCT north of Lower Rock Creek Crossing (9/15)

I completed the rest of the district's trail maintenance. I cut out three trees that had fallen across the PCT (2 trees ¼ mile from the ranger station, the other on the switchbacks just north of Lower Rock Creek Crossing), rocked the trail between the Lower Crossing and Army Creek, and (with the help of 3-1-1) naturalized a double-braided section of trail next to Rock Creek Lake.



Tree in Trail North of Lower Rock Creek Crossing (before/after; removed 7/5)



Tree ¼ Mile Downstream from Ranger Station Sign (before/during/after; removed 7/7)



Tree ¼ Mile Downstream from Ranger Station Sign (before/after; removed 8/22)

I also spent several days working on the use-trail around Lower Soldier Lake—brushing the willows on the west side and re-opening the trail through the willows on the east side. This second project should be completed by the area ranger next year. Hopefully, it will encourage people to stay out of the eastern meadow, a fragile spot that has sustained resource damage over the course of the last few years.





Lower Soldier Lake Use-Trail—West Side (before/after; brushed 8/11)



Lower Soldier Lake Use-Trail—West Side (before/after; brushed 8/11)

Lastly, I made the PCT at Lower Rock Creek more discernible by elevating the trail and bordering it with rocks. This should keep hikers from wandering down Rock Creek in search of the official crossing.



Lower Rock Creek Crossing/PCT (before/after; 9/5)

## 2. Problem Areas:

Problem areas within the district include the half-mile section of trail between Rock Creek Lake and Lower Soldier Lake as well as the switchbacks directly north of Lower Rock Creek Crossing. Because the Kern Crew usually visits Rock Creek last, these spots suffer from a lack of basic maintenance (a



situation that is particularly problematic considering the amount of foot and stock traffic in the district). New campsite inventory data illustrates a drastic change in use patterns over the last thirty years; use is shifting away from areas that have traditionally received the attention of park trail crews (like Colby Pass and the Kern Canyon) and to the John Muir and Pacific Crest Trail. It therefore seems appropriate and necessary to reorganize the trail maintenance schedule, having the crew visit Rock Creek, Crabtree, and Tyndall early in the summer season.

## G. Camp Areas:

### 1. Conditions:

Guyot Creek, Lower Rock Creek Crossing, Rock Creek Lake, and Lower Soldier Lake are still the primary camping areas within the district. These sites remained in good condition throughout the season due to frequent patrols. I also spent several days flush-cutting stumps at Lower Rock Creek Crossing to help naturalize this popular site.



Flush-Cutting Stumps at Lower Rock Creek Crossing (8/16)

### 2. Sanitation:

Despite the amount of traffic within the district, sanitation remained an issue of relatively little concern. Toilet paper blooms and human feces were only found at Lower Rock Creek Crossing, Rock Creek Lake, and Lower Soldier Lake. I removed no wag-bags (used or unused) from area campsites and/or bear boxes.

### 3. Fire Rings:

Fire ring maintenance proved an ongoing project this year. Thankfully, periodic patrols kept official fire pits reasonably sized for the majority of the summer.



Fire Ring in the Kern Canyon (before/after; reduced with the help of 9-2-32 on 7/20)



Fire Ring at the Rattlesnake Canyon/Shotgun Pass Junction (before/after; reduced on 7/13)

As in years past however, I spent a considerable amount of time removing illegal fire rings. I believe that universal fire regulations (like those in Kings Canyon) would help reduce the number of illegal fires that occur throughout the park.



Illegal Fire Ring on the Coyote Pass Trail (before/after; removed 7/17)



Illegal Fire Ring on the Coyote Pass Trail (before/after; removed 7/17)



Illegal Fire Ring at Guyot Creek (before/after; removed 8/20)



Illegal Fire Ring at Lower Rock Creek Crossing (before/after; removed 8/11)

#### 4. Food Storage:

As mentioned earlier, nearly everyone I encountered this summer was carrying a bear proof canister, if not two! As a result, there were no reports of bear activity in area campgrounds

Caching was the only significant food storage issue that I noticed within the district. During peak season, I found caches (some larger than others) in all of Rock Creek's bear boxes. Unlike other areas in the park (Tyndall or Woods Creek, for example) where caches are left by/for ultra-light thru-hikers, caching in Rock Creek is directly related to the Trail Crest exit quota. Visitors who are unable to exit via Whitney enter and exit through Rock Creek. These individuals leave food on their way in to retrieve several days later on their hike out. These caches take up precious space in food storage lockers and can become quite problematic in late July and August when 30+ people might want to use any given bear box. Because there are no official regulations that ban caching, it is difficult to discourage visitors from leaving food behind.



Food Cache Left for 3+ Days in the Rock Creek Lake Bear Box (8/11)

## H. Permit System:

### 1. Compliance:

Permit compliance was quite high this summer (99+%). I only met one person without a permit, and this individual received a citation.

### 2. Issuing Office:

The issuing offices did a great job this season! Visitors were generally well versed in, and willing to comply with, park regulations. My only recommendation is that the park's wilderness office staff collaborate with Yosemite National Park and the Forest Service to create a fact sheet specific to the John Muir Trail. This would be easier for both JMT hikers and trailhead rangers.

## I. Communications:

(b) (7)(E), (b) (5)



## J. Inventory:

### Fuel:

2 small pocket rocket canisters  
4 (full) and 2 (½ full) large pocket rocket canisters  
1 extra-large pocket rocket canister  
7 cans white gas  
2 ½ canisters Coleman stove gas  
1 ½ large propane tanks  
0 small propane tanks  
2 cans lighter fluid

### Maps:

3 Mineral King (7.5 min)  
3 Mt. Langley (7.5 min)  
2 Kern Lake (7.5 min)  
1 Kern Peak (7.5 min)  
2 Mt. Brewer (7.5 min)  
0 Johnson Peak (7.5 min)  
1 Mt. Whitney High Country (Harrison)  
4 Chagoopa Falls (7.5 min)  
1 Golden Trout Wilderness  
5 Mt. Kaweah (7.5 min)

3 Mt. Whitney (7.5 min)  
1 Mt. Williamson (7.5 min)  
2 Cirque Peak (7.5 min)  
2 Triple Divide (7.5 min)  
1 Kearsarge Peak (7.5 min)  
1 John Muir Wilderness and SEKI  
1 Trails Illustrated SEKI  
1 Lone Pine (15 min)  
2 Kern Peak (15 min)  
2 Mt. Whitney (15 min)

### Cabin Supplies:



3 burlap sack  
9 rolls toilet paper  
lots of clear trash bags (patrol size)  
2 boxes small ziplocks

25 big trash bags  
2 dish towels  
4 sponges  
2 boxes aluminum foil  
6 bundles paper towels  
0 boxes matches  
1 small bottle dishwashing liquid  
0 boxes coffee cones  
1 steno pad  
2 log books  
1 legal pad  
0 pocket pads  
3 pairs of gloves  
1 roll duct tape  
2 roles strapping tape  
1 small role electrical tape  
50+ AA batteries

7 lithium AA batteries  
9 renewable AA batteries  
0 AAA batteries  
5 C batteries  
18 D batteries  
5 binder clips  
4 pairs of earplugs  
2 jars contact cement  
6 highlighters  
6 sharpies  
3 markers (blue, red, black)  
7 regular pens, 7 park pens  
6 pencils  
2 patch kits  
100 ft. sisal  
2 ½ sticks Cutter insect repellent  
4 bottles/tubes insect repellent  
1 bag p-cord  
1 rubber radio antenna  
1 slingshot  
1 bag cotton balls  
1 bottle sunscreen  
1 laundry brush

#### First Aid Supplies:

2 oxygen regulator	10 pairs sunglasses	1 thermometer
1 microshield	lots of 4x4 gauze pads	3 syringe
4 sam splints	lots of 2x2 gauze pads	3 menstrual pads
1 pediatric nasal cannula	lots of 3x3 gauze pads	1 set trauma shears
4 adult non-rebreathers	lots of 3x4 gauze pads	3 providone-iodine pads
lots of moleskin	11 rolls athletic tape	3 stifneck collars
2 4 x 30' scotchcast splinting systems	lots of bandaids	1 splinter kit
1 4 x 15' scotchcast splinting system	lots of steristrips	1 adult bag-valve mask
1 pocket mask	lots of butterfly closures	1 stethoscope
1 cold packs	1 antibiotic ointment	1 bp cuff
5 adult nasal cannulas	30 alcohol prep pads	2 readisplints
lots of surgeon's gloves	1 large cardboard splint	1 multi-trauma dressing
8 run sheets	0 acetaminophen	2 4 ½ inch x 4 ½ yard dressings
	32 of ibuprofens	
	1 aspirin	

#### Oxygen:

3 Jumbo D (1350psi, 1400psi, and 1600psi)  
1 D (1500psi)



## K. Needs for Next Year:

### First Aid Supplies:

Suction device  
Runsheets  
Aspirin  
Triple antibiotic ointment  
Acetaminophen  
Pediatric non-rebreather mask

### Fuel:

Propane tanks (1-2 small)

### Other:

Rolls toilet paper (5)  
Dish Soap  
Laundry Soap  
Mouse-proof mask  
Candles  
Mousetraps (5)  
AAA batteries  
Pocket Pads (3)  
8 ½ x 11 pad (1 or 2)  
Pencil Sharpener  
Sunscreen  
Bleach  
Hot pads  
Clothespins (10)  
“Ready” bag  
Lamination sheets (20)  
Burlap sacks (10)  
Matches (3 boxes)  
Roll of duct tape (1)  
Large Carabineer

## L. Recommendations:

1. Continue to staff the Rock Creek Ranger Station with a paid employee.
2. Cairn a route up Mt. Langley.
3. Help the Sequoia Foundation with their trip plans for next year.
4. (b) (5), (b) (7)(E), (b) (7)(F) [REDACTED]
5. (b) (3) (B) [REDACTED]
6. Conduct October patrol of Rock Creek in order to stop fall break-ins.
7. Complete the use-trail on the east side of Lower Soldier Lake.
8. Send trail crew to Rock Creek in July rather than September.

9. Create universal fire regulations for Sequoia.
10. Create fact sheet specific to the JMT.
11. Improve radio communications in the backcountry.

## Demo Camp/Highline Instructions

### Supplies:

All supplies (except for the ladder and leather gloves) are stored in a grain sack that is in a metal box outside the Rock Creek Ranger Station.

- Ladder
- Two canvas tree-savers
- Two u-bolts
- One carabineer
- One Come-Along
- Come-Along instruction manual
- Metal highline
- One pair leather gloves

### Location:

The highline is part of the stock demo camp located on the northern side of Lower Rock Creek Crossing. Walk across the wooden footbridge to a hardened spot comprised solely of dirt and rocks. The highline attaches to trees on the eastern and western side of this tie-up area (a faint use-trail runs along the northern side). On the eastern side, the highline attaches to the tree sticks out furthest into the tie-up area. On the western side, it attaches to the tree closest to the use-trail.

### Instructions:

- Loop a tree-saver (wrapping it twice) around the tree on the west end of the tie-up area. Make sure that the ends of the tree-saver are equidistance from the tree. Use the ladder to help position the tree-saver about 10 feet above the ground.
- Attach a u-bolt to the tree-saver (through the loops on the end).
- Attach the highline (the side that can be adjusted by loosening the u-clasps) to the u-bolt.
- Wrap the second tree-saver around the tree on the east end of the tie-up area. Attach a u-bolt to the tree-saver.
- Clip a carabineer through the tree-saver's loops as well, making sure that the carabineer is *not* attached to the u-bolt.
- Attach the Come-Along to the first loop on the side of the highline that is not hooked to a tree (do not attach the Come-Along to the end of the highline; the end should be left free so that it can ultimately be attached to the second u-bolt).
- Attach the other end of the Come-Along to the carabineer.
- Use the Come-Along to pull the highline taut. Make sure that the tree-saver on the west side stays high.
- Once there is enough slack in the highline, attach the end of it to the u-bolt on the east side.
- Loosen the Come-Along and detach it from the carabineer and highline. Leave the carabineer on the tree-saver.



Cottonwood Pass Trail (9/21)



Chicken Spring Lake (9/21)

# Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park



## Tyndall 2007 Wilderness Ranger End of Season Report

From: Laura Pilewski

Through: Erika Jostad, Kern Supervisor

Read and approved: \_\_\_\_\_ signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 10/25/07

To: Gregg Fauth, Wilderness Coordinator

Read and approved: \_\_\_\_\_ signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 10/30/07



**Tyndall Creek and Kern Ranger Stations**  
**Ranger Laura Pilewski**  
**June 6-September 28, 2007**



**A.**

**a. Contacts** do not reflect visitor use in the Tyndall area as I was only there six out of fourteen weeks.

- i. Backpackers =700**
- ii. Day hikers =0 except on Mt. Whitney**
- iii. Stock = 7**

**b. Start of Season**

My first week was spent at the Hockett with 314 while everyone else was in law enforcement training. This was a great way to form camaraderie, clean campsites, report meadow conditions and discuss wilderness issues while making a presence in an area that is a popular early season destination for visitors. 311 mobilized my station as I was in the Kern helping the exotic plant crew.

**c. Law Enforcement /Citations**

As usual most violations were committed when the ranger was not around. The most common were illegal campfires (most often at the Wallace creek crossing on the JMT) and abandoned trash/food in bear boxes (especially at Wallace, Kern Hot Springs, & Junction meadow of the Kern). An old cache was found in three plastic buckets near Shepherd's Pass. 314 did "catch" one stock supported group that left their permit along with their mess in the Lower Funston bear box. I helped him remove what he couldn't carry on his first trip.

(b) (6)



Permit and trash left in Lower Funston food storage locker

I also witnessed multiple groups camping on vegetation or too close to water. These violations were handled on scene through education. Another somewhat common violation was improper food storage. On several instances visitors innocently admitted to losing food to a bear when asked. Depending on circumstances, these visitors were given citations/warnings from 311 or 313. Lastly, I was involved with two citations issued out of Crabtree. Both were for parties well exceeding group size limits. To address this last annual problem, it would be nice for permit applications to include a space for organization name(s) and have those automatically forwarded to the Kern supervisor, Wilderness Office or relevant supervisor.

#### **d. Medicals**

There was only one medical at Tyndall this year and it happened while I was “relieving” 313 of Crabtree. It was a 38 y/o male HAPE victim. Apparently, the helicopter pilot Keith had rescued this gentleman last year from Le Conte with the same ailment.

#### **e. Fatalities**

313 and I were ready to respond to search for an overdue climber on Mt. Russell. But, 552 found this person deceased before we headed out the door of the ranger station. Carrie Vernon and Keith Brisson did an amazing job locating the victim with only fifteen minutes of daylight left.

#### **f. Searches**

The only SAR I participated in was for a report of a man with possible AMS on Mt. Whitney. 313 and I responded in the dark with overnight gear and Gamow bag. We were called off before reaching trail crest. The man had self evacuated.

#### **g. Weather**

Despite the only five percent of snow pack measured within the Kern drainage, fires were not too plentiful and water stayed abundant enough for at least human consumption. A lot of small tarns dried up, but most mapped sources remained present. The spring immediately above and below the Tyndall Ranger Station ran year round. Even at the Kern Ranger Station the level of Coyote Creek did not fluctuate much from June to September. The Kern Trail Crew cleaned out the irrigation system so well that we never had to alter the dam to get water to the cabin.

Of course, overall, it was an exceptionally dry summer. Meadows were brown and crisp upon our arrival. All passes were snow free (even N/NE facing ones). Creek crossings

were of no consequence. One could even ford the Kern early season above the Kern Ranger Station. By late season it was just a trickle. There were only two to three bouts of unsettled stormy weather that brought some much needed rain and some lightning.



Dry Meadow in lower Kern Canyon

On September 20<sup>th</sup> the weather finally became interesting. Winds howled for 48 hours, knocking down trees and visitors (attempting to exit Shepherd's Pass). It snowed for three days and nights blanketing the Tyndall area with anywhere from 4" at the cabin to 2-3' in the wind loaded spots on the pass. Thankfully, our season was extended long enough to help aid visitors up and down the crest. I ended up giving away fuel, food, maps (with alternative exit points), and advice to those stranded. Ultimately, I broke trail so that the visitors could make it out expeditiously and safely.



Late season snow storm at Shepherd Pass

#### **h. Fires**

Lightning started numerous fires within the Sierra Nevada. One of the first spread along the east side from Big Pine to Independence, from the sagebrush to tree line. It was short

lived but intense. Several trailheads consequently were closed, including Shepherds Pass for a brief period of time.

The Zaca fire of Santa Barbara brought copious amounts of smoke to the area off and on for at least three weeks. The Grouse Fire in the Kern closed the trail south of the ranger station temporarily and for a few days brought significant smoke up canyon. Helicopters could be heard constantly filling their buckets of water just south of the station. Aside from some isolated lightning strike fires, the Willow Fire was the only sizable one within the backcountry of Sequoia NP. It was situated in the perfect location where it did not threaten any trails, visitors, structures and it was a model of “good” behavior. Not too smoky, not too wimpy.

### **B. Use Patterns**

Overall, use appeared exceptionally lower early and late season despite the user-friendly nature of good weather, low creek crossings and snow free passes.

- a. **Backpackers** seemed even more concentrated along the JMT and HST than usual. The Kern-Kaweah/Colby Pass trail gained popularity as well. Due to the lack of snow, the passes along the Kings-Kern Divide, Harrison Pass in particular, were also used more frequently, perhaps, than previous years.
- b. **Stock** use in the Tyndall area was quite low. Ironically, when Forester and Shepherd’s Passes are snow free, so too are the passes up north so Rock Creek Pack Station stays closer to home. Cottonwood Pack Station never made it to the area. The Kern Trail Crew spent approximately a week with twelve head.
- c. **Administrative** use brought the most stock to the area. The Kern Trail Crew spent two weeks each in the Kern-Kaweah and Cold Springs, and a week at Tyndall Creek. Boiano and crew briefly surveyed for frogs and invertebrates near Lake South America and Wright Lakes Basin, however, I was heading to the Kern at the time and did not get the pleasure of working with them. I helped Graban and Meadows when they came through individually for campsite inventory. Ultimately this season, I spent eight days on this enjoyable project. I met the annual military trip at Crabtree for one night. Since it appears Fauth’s efforts to minimize over flight deviations has worked and the incessant noise of high level commuting flights will remain constant, possibly we could have this gathering every other year. This is unless we changed the focus of the trip to other Wilderness issues within the respective areas.
- d. **Commercial** use was low in the Tyndall area. Just a few stock trips led by Rock Creek Pack Station and High Sierra Pack Trains (with Yosemite Mountain Guides in tow) came through.

### **C. Natural Resources**

- a. **Bear Activity** was isolated to a flurry of activity along the Wallace Creek corridor of the HST (and Wright Ck. JMT crossing). A couple of different bears wreaked havoc in this area briefly, but only two isolated incidents of food being obtained were reported. Both parties had canisters but had food out of them and were not paying attention while filtering water or cooking dinner. See BIMS.





Bear at Wallace Creek

Bear incidents continued to be high in the vicinity of Kearsarge Pass. As usual, people start their trip with too much food and the bears rip off what doesn't fit in their canisters. Trailhead personnel need to emphasize this key point. It will save bears' lives.

#### **b. Wildlife**

The most common observations in the Tyndall area included coyote, deer, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, American Kestrel, Hermit Thrush, Red Crossbill, Mountain Chickadee, Black Tailed Jackrabbit to name a few. Horned Lark were seen a few times in the alpine meadows west of Shepherd's Pass as were frequently the anxious American Pipits. A yearling black bear caught me by surprise one evening at Lake South America. Although my Spartan recorded observations might not back it up, pika were heard pretty much everywhere within their expected habitat.



Pika!

Owls were also prolific (or at least more conspicuous to me). A pair of Great Horned Owls bantered one evening at Rock Creek Lake. I also photographed one in the Kern. A juvenile Northern Saw Whet Owl dive bombed me at Crabtree.

- c. **Vegetation** was real dry this year. Let's see what else ... Once again, I continued my quest for herbarium specimens. I'm running neck and neck with Frenzel, star botanist, these days. I think I found a few on my tour of the Kings-Kern Divide, possibly one new to the existing park species list (*Subularia aquatica* var. *americana*).

**Meadows.** Initially I was quite concerned that area meadows would see increased use due to snow free passes. As luck would have it, grazing and consequential impacts to these low yield (even lower yielding this season) meadows was minimal.

**Species Composition.** I had a terrific time working for a week in the Rock Creek area with Haultain and Frenzel. It was a great opportunity to work with fellow botanists and learn and discover things that I had taken for granted while working the last three years there. I think having the plant ecologist in the field is invaluable. Haultain is clearly inspired by her work when she is out there and we learn a lot from each other while viewing these meadow systems together as a team. Anyone making decisions about the wilderness/backcountry needs to visit it first hand to fully understand the whole system behind it. Besides, if nothing else it gives time and focus to listen to the input of those who have observed the subtle changes first hand.

***Holcus lanatus.*** I would like to take this opportunity to thank Demetry and Thiel for funding a portion of my season. As much as I despise this non-native plant, it helped pay the bills! A small silver lining. But, seriously, this recent invasion to the species rich meadows of the Kern Canyon has the potential to be devastating. I spent two to three weeks total working alone and with the exotic plant crew (a wonderful, dedicated bunch). We all worked together at the beginning of the season attempting to eradicate this plant by hand from known locations. Later, I surveyed the east side of the Kern River and south to Kern Lakes to map infestations. Removing small, isolated populations (i.e. Up. & Lwr. Funston, Soda Springs, Big Pasture, etc.) seems effective. However, areas of high concentrations in particular Small Pasture, may take years to control. Kern Lakes just adjacent to our boundary will probably forever be plagued. We will have to take a look at administrative stock use in this area to eliminate the spread of this noxious weed. Private and Commercial users entering the park should be encouraged to bring feed if staying in infested areas prior to moving up canyon.





Laura Pilewski removing velvet grass in the Kern Canyon

#### **D. Cultural Resources**

##### **a. Prehistoric Sites**

No comment.

##### **b. Historic Sites**

No comment.

#### **E. Backcountry Facilities**

##### **a. Cabin**

As mentioned in my 2003 report, it would save resources (firewood) if the ceiling within the cabin were completed. It would also keep the snow surveyors warmer and provide much needed storage space. More importantly, as Steiner mentioned in 2006 “Thor determined that the station should be reshingled next season.” One can see light shining through the roof in places and as a result, a small ice flow spills over the bunk beds in the winter.

##### **b. Signs**

All intact.

#### **F. Trails**

##### **a. Trail Activities**

The Kern Crew led by the legend Billy Hancock spent a significant amount of time repairing severe damage along the Kern-Kaweah trail. It is now stock passable and a bit friendlier to those on foot. It was an appropriate year to tackle it as they saw quite a few visitors funneling through daily.

**b. Problem Areas**

The neglected John Muir Trail north of Tyndall Creek, however, is in need of serious maintenance if not construction work along the precarious old switchbacks. Like Mt. Whitney, the JMT is more popular than ever. Even four pack trains braved it this year. At one point, a wall had blown out making it impassable to stock. Thankfully, the highly skilled rock handler/artist came to the rescue.



Cavity eroding the John Muir Trail south of Forester Pass

Within 24 hours, Moreno, construction crew leader extraordinaire, had it repaired and back in service. Not only did Moreno perform this collateral duty, he inspired his crew to repair the chute below Trail Crest. Working at 13,650' for approximately three weeks, the crew was still all smiles (but not much fat) under his stellar leadership. They accomplished this and much more in the Crabtree area. The re-route of Shepherd's from last year is still in great shape. Next year let's focus on a trail used by thousands of hikers from around the world.



Thanks goes out to Tyler Johnson, Greg Feltis and crew for demobing us rangers.

## **G. Camp Areas**

### **a. Conditions**

Bear boxes are still the most popular. Towards the end of the season the camps at the junction of the ranger station trail were a bit worn. I plan on rehabbing these and the one below the station next year. I did get the opportunity to define and rehab the giant bare spot that formed over the years adjacent to the Frog Ponds bear box.

**b. Sanitation** overall was good but it only takes one or two surprises to scar one for the whole season. Trailhead rangers will always need to address this sensitive but critical topic.

### **c. Fire rings**

Numerous fire pits were destroyed especially in the Wright Creek drainage thanks to those discovered while doing campsite inventory. Those however were mostly of another era. Presently, the visitor still doesn't seem to grasp the somewhat new fire regulations at the Wallace Creek/JMT junction. Sign or no sign. It is a perpetual problem. They build it. We dismantle it. Every patrol. To add insult to injury, visitors left much more trash in fire pits (illegal or legal) this year than normal. All subjects that need emphasis at the trailhead.

### **d. Firewood Availability**

Caprio's presentation this spring was quite enlightening. How perfect is it that at the 10,000' mark almost 90% of the endemic foxtail pine forests within the park would be protected. What a convenient match to Kings Canyon. If we lowered it a bit to include the rest of the foxtails it would be almost a moot point as they occur along the dry barren Kern rim away from trail corridors. Let's make it simple for the visitor. Please remember this come time for the Wilderness Management Plan. Coming soon?

### **e. Food Storage**

Backcountry enthusiasts love the bear cans and just about 98% carry them. But, they still rely heavily on the bear boxes for overflow or long distance hiking. They also came in handy this year for those carrying those designer stuff sacks, the Ursack.

Unfortunately, food caching and abandoning trash/food in these boxes was an increasing problem this year. Hopefully, this trend can be reversed through education next season. Since there are three boxes within a mile radius of the Tyndall Ranger Station, I plan to monitor and probably encourage the removal of the box downstream of the station. For

one, it is not a very popular camp. Private stock users like it but should already be carrying bear proof panniers. Hiking parties usually have canisters. If anybody has overflow, barrels are available in a pinch at the station. I also plan on naturalizing that highly impacted site next year.

## **H. Permit System**

### **a. Trailheads**

Anna Marie Echter and Chad Namolik did a great job giving accurate information at the Lodgepole trailhead. Unfortunately, it sounds like they didn't get to range much, a detriment to disseminating specific information about the backcountry. 319, on the other hand, ranged greatly and provided good information as a liaison. The only two recommendations I would have for next year would be, one, that he or she would always have a key to the cabin on hand for emergency purposes (obtaining medical supplies, food, gear, etc.). Two, coordinate patrols more efficiently by informing the backcountry rangers of their plans when coming through respective areas. This avoids redundancy and/or facilitates meetings when appropriate. As always the case, trailhead rangers are an integral part of educating the visitor about all aforementioned topics.

### **b. Issuing Office**

I. (b) (7)(E), (b) (5)



## **J. Needs for Next Year**

- Fully funded Tyndall ranger position.
- Fully funded Crabtree ranger position.
- Fully funded Rock Creek ranger position.
- Fully funded Little Five ranger position.
- Fully funded Kern ranger position.
- Fully funded Hockett ranger position.
- Extra memory card(s) for cameras.
- Clam shells for all stations.
- 3 new cotton mattress covers from warehouse.
- Small wooden collapsible chair for inside cabin.
- Small wooden collapsible stool for getting into loft.
- Updated bear box location lists w/ detailed locations.

**K. Recommendations**

- Medical training: include hematuria and nausea/vomiting protocols & discussion.
- Trailheads: Address/highlight aforementioned issues. Coordinate patrols.
- Permits: Forward large groups/organizations to area supervisors.
- Kern Ranger/ velvet grass eradicator position without stock.
- Campsite inventory position to rehab known sites.

**L. Pertinent Inventory**

See attached.



## Crabtree 2007 Wilderness Ranger End of Season Report

From: Rob Pilewski

Through: Erika Jostad, Kern Supervisor

Read and approved: signed Date: 10/25/07

To: Gregg Fauth, Wilderness Coordinator

Read and approved: signed Date: 10/30/07



**Crabtree Ranger Station  
Ranger Rob Pilewski  
June 6-September 28, 2007**



**A. General Observations**

This was my 16<sup>th</sup> summer working as a seasonal wilderness ranger at SEKI. The Crabtree patrol area continues to see a steady flow of park visitors from mid-July to Labor Day (this window is wider on a dry year like this) with the focal point of most visitors trip being Mt. Whitney.



Summit Mt. Whitney in July

**a. Contacts**

- i. Backpackers- 2,125**
- ii. Day hikers-1,067**
- iii. Stock- 200**

I installed a trail counter on the JMT across from the ranger station in mid-August. This is in an effort to get a better handle on use patterns and numbers. I took frequent readings to determine busy times of the week and numbers. In the 37 days the trail counter was in use it counted 1,425 “visitors” passing on the trail (both directions).

### **b. Start of Season**

I arrived at the Crabtree ranger station on June 21<sup>st</sup> after 2 weeks of training in the frontcountry. Erika put together 3 days of great backcountry training followed by the LE and EMT refreshers. Following a dry winter like last year we should try to mobilize to our wilderness stations as early as possible, ideally by mid-June. There were many park visitors in the backcountry upon my arrival and signs that many people had been in the area prior to my arrival.



Illegal campfire at Crabtree in spring

There were numerous unlawful campfires, abandoned trash in bear boxes and at the ranger station and other wilderness impacts that could be prevented with an earlier ranger presence. There is a steady flow of PCT hikers whose numbers grow every year and who have mostly already passed thru the Crabtree area prior to my arrival. Ranger presence goes a long way in preventing much unlawful activity and impacts to the wilderness.

The high sierra was remarkably dry this season. I hiked over Mt. Whitney on my first patrol of the season (June 21<sup>st</sup>) and did not set foot on snow one time. Numerous springs on the west slope of Mt. Whitney were bone dry in late June. The Crabtree area looked more like September conditions than June and this continued to be the trend throughout the summer.

### **c. Law Enforcement**

Education of park visitors in regard to achieving compliance with NPS regulations continues to be my focus. We confuse park visitors with campfire regulations and the long list of “exceptions” to the 11,200’ elevation limit. If we were to lower and standardize the fire regulations to , say, 10,800’, we would serve the dual purpose of protecting the fragile Foxtail pine forest and make compliance and enforcement much more manageable for visitors to the wilderness. Tony Caprio made an excellent case for lowering the fire elevation to protect the foxtail pine forest at this years training.



Clothing and trash recovered from Crabtree food storage locker

Trash and abandoned property continue to be a problem. Bear boxes are usually the receptacle for such “trash”, but in the “Whitney Zone” one never knows what they will find at any given time or place. The summit continues to be littered with various memorials and other abandoned “junk”. During the busy summer season it is important for NPS rangers to pick up and pack out this “junk” or it will accumulate out of control.

Group size limits are also an on-going law-enforcement issue. I received numerous complaints from park visitors this summer regarding other parties exceeding the group size limit and negatively impacting their wilderness experience. Several citations were issued in the Crabtree area for group size violations, including one to a local chapter Sierra club trip traveling with 2 permits and 27 people.

A seasonal LE commission is an important tool for the Crabtree ranger to have and to utilize. A citation issued in the field is much more effective than one issued and mailed at a later date.

#### **d. Citations**

Citations were issued in the Crabtree area for dog in the park, no permit, exceeding the allowable group size and unlawful fires. Written warnings were also issued for harassing wildlife and unlawful fires. Law-enforcement actions were conducted in the field by supervisory field ranger Erika Jostad and myself. (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]

#### **e. Medicals**

The Crabtree ranger sees a wide range of medicals throughout the summer. Many minor medicals, such as blisters, sunburn, AMS, and abrasions are addressed by the area ranger. There were 6 helicopter evacuations from the area this summer.

#### **f. Transports**

\*A 63 year old male was evacuated to Southern Inyo hospital for abdominal pain and malaise.

\*A 39 year old female was evacuated to SIH for cardiac arrhythmia.

\*A 38 year old male was evacuated to SIH for HAPE.

\*A 16 year old male was evacuated to SIH for dehydration caused by vomiting and diarrhea.

\*A 20 year old male was evacuated to SIH for hematuria and abdominal pain.

\*A 31 year old male was evacuated to Ash Mt. for abdominal pain and shortness of breath.

#### **g. Fatalities**

There was one fatality on the east side of Mt. Russell, on the Inyo NF, this season. Erika managed the recovery efforts with the Inyo SO and helicopter

(b)

(7)

#### **h. Searches**

I was involved with 3 “searches” this summer that quickly resolved prior to the need for additional resources. This season we implemented some changes in the Mt. Whitney summit SAR cache. The cache, which has the gear necessary for several people to spend the night out, is located in the locked NPS side of the summit hut. This summer I placed a sign stating the SEKI policy on Mt. Whitney SAR. It gives the dispatch phone # so that the cell phone call for help from the summit will go to SEKI dispatch and not a 911 operator in Nevada. (b) (7)(F)



Emergency cache in Mt. Whitney shelter and combo lock

#### **i. Weather**

This was one of the driest summers, preceded by the 3<sup>rd</sup> driest winter on record. This amounted to very dry conditions on the ground in the high country. The two tarns above Guitar Lake which many visitors use as a base camp for hiking Mt. Whitney were dry by mid-July. Many springs were dry when I arrived in late June. Fortunately the ranger station spring flowed all summer. As I write this report the first snow of the season has blanketed the high country outside the cabin so let's hope this continues into a wet winter.

#### **j. Fires**

Despite the dire forecast for an active fire season there was only one fire that affected the Crabtree area this summer. The Willow fire put smoke into the area into the area in late July and continued to burn slowly throughout the



summer. The big fire on the coast burning near Santa Barbara also led to some smokey day's at Crabtree in late August.

## **B. Use Patterns**

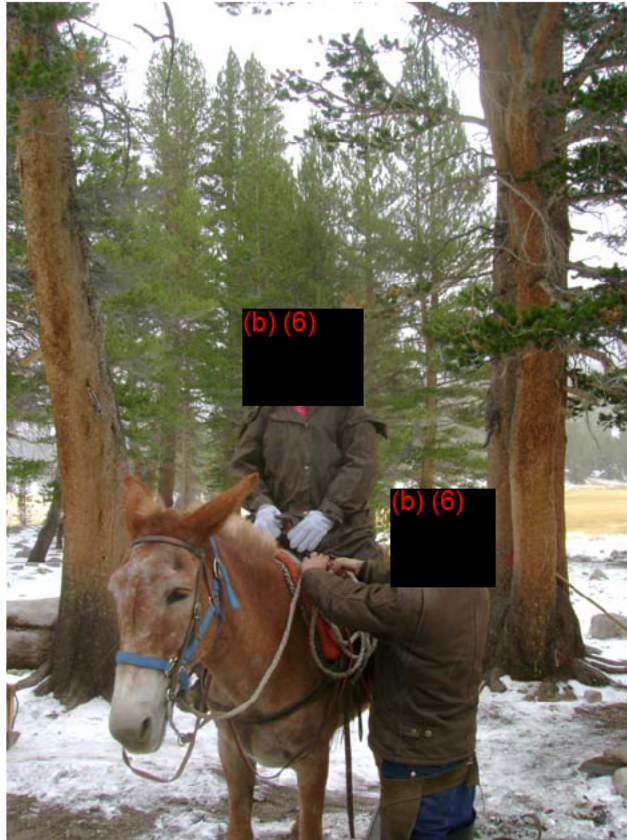
### **a. Backpackers**

The JMT and PCT see more visitation every year. Following such a dry winter the PCT thru hikers are able to hike the southern sierra section as early as May. The majority of these folks had already passed thru Crabtree prior to my arrival on June 21<sup>st</sup>. The JMT continues to be a real international scene with backpackers from all over the world enjoying the trail named after the old sierra sage. I met the Japanese John Muir biographer this summer and despite the language barrier our mutual admiration for the man largely responsible for this National Park was obvious. The High Sierra trail is very busy in July and August, and where the HST and JMT meet at Wallace creek to Mt. Whitney is very busy throughout the summer.

The exit quota on Trail Crest continues to result in more overnight use in the Crabtree area. I spoke with the Inyo NF rangers this summer and they seem to think that the wag-bag program may negate the need for the exit quota someday. The loops from Horseshoe meadow and Onion Valley to Whitney Portal continue to be very popular with backpackers. The bear box sites are still heavily used by backpackers on the "Whitney circuit".

### **b. Stock**

This was a busy season for stock use in the Crabtree area, as with the backpackers in the area. Mt. Whitney is the focal point of most stock supported trips. The exceptionally dry conditions had me attempting to shuffle the area stock use around as to not impact any one area too heavily. Rock Creek Pack Station was the most frequent user of the area. I think that recent USFS regulations dictating stock user nights in areas that RCPS historically has used have resulted in more user nights in SEKI. Perhaps one day we too will have allotted stock user nights to help better manage area meadows. Sylvia visited the area in early August and was instrumental in assessing stock use and giving me some guidelines in managing area meadows for the rest of the season. These site visits by the plant ecologist are vital in the management of area meadow resources. Thanks Sylvia!! For a more detailed account of stock use at Crabtree please refer to my stock use observations report.



Rock Creek Pack Station packer at Upper Crabtree Meadow

**c. Administrative**

The construction trail crew was camped at Upper Crabtree meadow all summer while working hard on much needed projects on area trails. The military trip, hosted by Gregg Fauth and Chief Ranger JD Swed were in the Crabtree area in early September with representatives from Lemoore, China Lakes, and Edwards military bases. This years military trip was one of the best ever with thought provoking conversation each night focusing on wilderness management and military over flights.

In a very positive development the NPS packers and stock were utilized to de-mob Kern rangers in late September. This was the first season of my 16 in the park that NPS stock was used for this purpose and I strongly advocate that this become standard operating procedure. Thanks to Erika and Tyler for making it happen.

**d. Commercial**

Commercial use monitoring forms were kept for all commercial parties contacted in the field. The 3 commercial pack stations contacted in the area this summer were; Rock Creek Pack Station, Cottonwood Pack Station, and High Sierra Pack Trains. The only 2 commercial hiking parties contacted this summer were Call of the Wild, and Southern Yosemite Mountain Guides. Both of these groups furnished the appropriate permits and were anxious to comply with my requests.



## **C. Natural Resources**

### **a. Bear Activity**

Again, despite our forecast for an active bear season things were pretty quiet on the bear front this summer. Most JMT hikers that I contacted denied seeing any bears the length of the JMT and if they did encounter bears it was in Yosemite NP. The majority of bear sightings were in the Kern Canyon and reported by HST hikers. The only bear incidents this summer occurred over the course of 2 days in the vicinity of Wallace and Wright creeks where a bear obtained a small amount of food one night from a campsite and the following day from a hiker stopping to get water. Please refer to BIMS form for details. We were bracing for an on-going problem there with this bear but there were no incidents reported the rest of the season. Most visitors are carrying bear canisters these days.

### **b. Wildlife**

It was a typical summer for wildlife sightings in the Crabtree area. The mule deer and marmot populations are healthy, as are the ground squirrels and chipmunks. The high alpine pika population seems to be hanging in there with many “squeek-squeek” sounds noted from area talus fields. I did not observe any Mt. yellow-legged frogs this summer. The only water source left where I had observed frogs last year, at the pond above upper Crabtree Lake, did not produce any frogs when surveyed this summer. The only unusual wildlife sightings this year were raptors seen in the fall in the Whitney creek drainage. A ferruginous hawk was hanging around the trail crew camp providing some rodent control there. A peregrine falcon was observed at upper Crabtree meadow and a rough-legged hawk was observed along Whitney Creek.

### **c. Vegetation**

Area vegetation was mostly dry and brown by mid-summer. All Kern rangers pitched in down at the Kern ranger station on velvet grass eradication efforts. A site visit by the plant ecologist helped to guide management of area meadows. In September residual biomass monitoring was conducted at; Upper and Lower Crabtree meadows, Strawberry, Sandy, and Wallace Waterfall meadows. All in all, it seems that area meadows fared quite well this summer given the dry conditions and amount of stock use.

Repeat photography was taken this summer at many sites in the Crabtree area at the request of the plant ecologist. Given the dry conditions it was a good season to compare with seasons past.

## **D. Cultural Resources**

### **a. Historic Sites**

The Mt. Whitney hut, which turns 100 years old in 2009, has remained largely unchanged in my 16 years in the park. With minor maintenance performed on each patrol on the summit the place looks pretty darned good considering the high volume of visitors on Mt. Whitney each summer. The door on the visitor's side of the hut survived another summer, but should probably be replaced in the next couple of years. Maybe for the 100 year anniversary a new commemorative door could be hung?



Mt. Whitney shelter with deteriorating door and graffiti

## **E. Backcountry Facilities**

### **a. Cabin**

The Crabtree ranger station continues to be a well functioning and comfortable cabin for the Crabtree ranger. The only needs are for a new screen door and 2 new windows.

### **b. Signs**

All area signs are in good shape. The "no fires within ¼ mile" sign was removed from the bear box at Wallace Creek. There were less illegal fires after it was removed. So it goes. I placed two signs at Lower Crabtree meadow to point stock users in the right direction of appropriate stock camps. A sign was placed on the Crabtree drift fence "close this gate to protect wilderness" to standardize this message on all drift fences in the Sequoia Park backcountry.



Sign at drift gate below Lower Crabtree Meadow

## **F. Trails**

### **a. Trail Activities**

It was a banner year for much needed trail work in the Mt. Whitney area. The “cons” crew arrived early in June and spent the entire summer working hard on area trails. The big project completed was at Trail Crest on a washed out (scree slide) section of trail that was hazardous to visitors. The crew; Lorenzo Moreno, Brian Pope, Major Bryant, Pat Domic, and Jessica Chacon, spent the month of August camped at Hitchcock Lake (11,700’) and working at Trail Crest (13,650’). They are to be highly commended for their efforts. The Mt. Whitney trail has not looked this good in many, many, years. There were many favorable comments from visitors concerning their hard work. The other big project the crew completed was the section of trail between Guitar Lake and Timberline Lake.

### **b. Problem Areas**

The big problem areas were addressed this summer. Small maintenance projects could be worked in future years; below Timberline Lake, and the various sections of the “triangle” connecting the JMT and the PCT.

## **G. Camp Areas**

### **a. Conditions**

Bear box locations continue to see the most overnight use. The Kern Hot Springs, Junction Meadow, Wallace Creek, and Crabtree Meadow bear box sites are the most heavily used camps in the patrol area. I am planning, pending approval, to relocate the ranger station bear-box to a new location in 2008 to give the current site a rest. Considering the high volume of visitors using the area all summer camp conditions look pretty darn good. Conditions at Guitar Lake continue to improve, but the area ranger still needs to spend a good deal of time patrolling the area and picking up trash and wag-bags throughout the summer.

**b. Sanitation**

This was the second full season of the wag-bag “pack out your poop” program. The wag-bag station is at the Mt. Whitney trail junction. It consists of a dispensary and informational sign. We handed out approximately 1,500 bags this summer with many hikers carrying wag bags issued at trailheads. We asked visitors to pack out their human waste from Guitar Lake and above to Whitney Portal. Only if visitors were exiting to Whitney Portal do we ask them to use the wag-bags. So far the program has been a success. I have received very little in the way of negative feedback from park visitors, and conditions are improving. The human waste issue in the “Whitney Zone” received some positive press this fall when the environmental editor from the NY Times was in the area for a feature story on this very topic. I met her on the summit for an interview and we discussed the history of the Mt. Whitney toilet and the wag-bag program. I have yet to see the article, but apparently there is a print version (front page!), and online version which has received many hits after coming out. This will help our crusade to manage human waste in the “Whitney Zone”. Thanks (b) (6) !!

**Fire rings**

Several fire-rings are maintained along Whitney creek. Visitors continue to be confused by Sequoia Park fire regs and inappropriate fire rings crop up as a result. Very few visitors, except stock users, use fires to cook on these days. When the weather gets cold and wet is when visitors want to have fires.

**c. Firewood Availability**

The firewood availability continues to be an issue at the Crabtree meadows and Wallace Creek campgrounds. The fire restrictions should remain in place there. We need to lower the fire elevation to better protect the foxtail pine forest. 10,800' across the board without exceptions in Sequoia Park would be an appropriate elevation.

**d. Food Storage**

The new bear box at the ranger station campground is a great addition to area facilities. It is mouse proof, lightly colored and ventilated, and big enough to handle even the busiest nights at Crabtree. Most visitors, whether they are in a canister required area or not are carrying their own food storage. On a trip longer than five days it is difficult to fit all scented items in a bear canister and overflow is often a problem. All stock parties contacted this season had their own park approved food storage. Most use the panniers and some carry small barrels. SEKI staff has done an excellent job of getting the bear message to park visitors. There is, however, some confusion with thru hikers as to whether they are required to carry canisters in “Canister required” areas. Most of them do carry them because they think they are required. I think the PCTA is telling thru hikers that they are required to carry canisters. There is no harm in this, but it seems we should try and give visitors accurate information.



Food storage locker at Crabtree Ranger Station

## **H. Permit System**

### **a. Trailheads**

There were no changes in the area permit system this season. Wilderness visitors seem satisfied with the current system and permit compliance was again good this year.

### **b. Issuing Office**

Nicole, Gary, and Sharon did an excellent job this season in the wilderness office. They kept us well informed throughout the summer and were very supportive of the needs of the wilderness rangers. The weather report prior to round up is a good addition and should be continued next season.

The new interagency visitor center in Lone Pine had its grand opening this summer. The staff there did an excellent job of informing visitors of park regulations and travel conditions. Our NPS representative there, Greg Aldape, did a good job of acting as liaison with the USFS. Greg also did a good job on his wilderness patrols and supporting the wilderness rangers.

## **I. Communications**

(b) (7)(F)





**J. Needs for Next Year**

- 4 small propane (or 1 large and 2 small)
- 12rolls TP
- 4 PT
- 5 scrubber sponge
- 2 boxes matches
- 1 roll duct tape

**K. Recommendations**

- \*Lower fire elevation limit to 10,800 or so to better protect park resources.
- \*Have commercial pack stations go through the same permit-quota system as other wilderness travelers. We would be better able to manage and track use if the NPS or USFS issued these permits.
- \*Extend the field season for wilderness rangers to better manage park resources.
- \*Continue to work with the Inyo County SO and Inyo USFS on incidents along the park boundary. Erika has done an excellent job these past few years in improving relationships with these agencies and this should continue. If Erika and the NPS had an office on the east side this would better facilitate operations for us rangers along the crest.

To: Ned Kelleher, Cedar Grove Sub-District Ranger  
From: Sara Benson, Road's End Trailhead Ranger  
RE: Summary of talking points for the 2007 Road's End Annual Report  
Date: Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Dear Ned,

The following is a list of ideas for improvements next year at Road's End, as well as a list of projects I kept meaning to finish this year, but ran out of time to do. I've also included a list of things that need to get done, but which I couldn't do, before the end of the season this year.

### Things that need to be done by the end of this season (2007):

- Continue filling out **per diem weekly reports** and sending a photocopy to Ellen McClellan in Grant Grove. I only completed this task through late August, but for the last week in August and all weeks in September these forms will still need to be done.
- **Process Road's End fees** for Sept. 4th through the closing date (Sept. 24th). Also, **self-issue permits will need to be set up** and then processed for the days that John is not working (I assume that means every Monday and Tuesday from now until RE closes). White copies of all wilderness permits need to be sent to the Wilderness Office.
- **Update the new RE and backcountry patrol statistics Excel spreadsheet** I created with the statistics for September, including fees, wilderness permits and B.C. patrol logs.
- **Track down missing bear canisters.** There are still a few bear canisters that have not been returned. Some may be at the SNHA head office, as they were due to be mailed back. Others simply were never returned, to the best of our knowledge, and those people should be contacted by phone before their credit cards are charged for the full amount of replacing the rental canister. Also, some bear canisters are due to be returned after RE closes, so before an end-of-year inventory is done, the bear can rental return shed will need to be checked before inventory time. Finally, (b) (6) has provided us with a list of the bear canisters he took from RE to Grant Grove (**Garcias #109, 371, 374, 376, 377, 383, 390, 393, 397, 401 403; Weekenders #715, 719; Expedition #802**), and this should be included in the inventory (otherwise, we'll think more bear canisters went missing than actually did). As of 9/6/07, we are missing bear canisters **Weekender #718** (due back 7/14/07; SNHA may or may not have contacted the renter already, as I did fax the paperwork to them); **Weekenders #708, 717** (due back 8/6/07; supposed to be mailed back to SNHA, but we've never received them at RE); and **Garcias #344, 320, 335, 356, 326, 375, 365, 360, 414, 314** (due back 8/26/07; Krissy rented these to a large group exiting at Whitney, and the group leader called the C.G. R.O. recently to find out where to send them back to, so I expect SNHA has rec'd. them, but they have not yet been sent back to RE). **Weekender #706** and **Expedition #809** are broken, and are sitting in the back of the R.O. Bear tech. Logan West has borrowed **Weekender #705** until 9/8/07.
- I've noticed that **mice** have been chewing on paper products at Road's End. I don't know if you usually remove everything from the information station before closing it for the winter, but that should probably be done this year, or we'll lose some supplies, signs, etc.

## Projects to consider doing in 2008:

- **Replace minimum-impact regulations signs**, which are torn and out-of-date, as well as the **campground maps** (especially for Upper Paradise Valley and Junction Meadow, where the maps need to be corrected – the former has misplaced site #1, the latter doesn't accurately show the location of the new drift fence), **at all backcountry campsites**. I've already made and laminated the signs, and stored them in the "Extra Filing Supplies" drawer at Road's End. They're ready to be put up, but we all just ran out of time to do so.
- **Create a photo hiking guidebook for visitors**. I started this project using a three-ring binder this summer (it's the green one by the cash register), but my goal was to get photos of all the major hiking trails (both day and overnight) and descriptions and maps of trails. Currently, we have only some hiking trail overviews and backcountry campsite maps in the binder, as well as information about wilderness permits and climbing Mt. Whitney. However, I've found just this to be helpful when helping visitors plan backcountry trips.
- **Re-do the chalkboard and wipe-board info outside and inside Road's End station**.
- **Give backcountry visitors info about where to recycle their fuel canisters** outside the park and remind them that they can't dispose of them in our dumpsters. I made signs about this already, but wasn't able to put them on the dumpsters because we didn't have any tape or adhesive that was strong enough. However, the dumpsters signs are at Road's End, ready to be posted; I've stored them in the drawer labeled "Extra Filing Supplies."
- **Re-do, simplify and organize the Road's End S.O.P. binder**. It's very useful for training new employees and as a reference for substitute staff at Road's End (e.g., 414).
- **Create a safe log binder for Road's End**. The safe log sheets worked well this year.
- **Create a weather information board to post at Road's End**. All staff will update this info board daily based on the 9 a.m. morning weather report and the 11 a.m. backcountry round-up's NOAA weather report for higher elevations.
- **Create a half-sized food-storage violation form (double-sided)** to waste less paper.
- **Update fishing regulations form (the small Cedar Grove version)** with a more clearly drawn map and more clearly written instructions. Make sure it doesn't contradict the park-wide regulations (i.e., rainbow trout don't have to be released in CG front country?).

## Ideas for improvements at Road's End in 2008:

- **Talk to SNHA about not renting out Wild Ideas canisters for mail-backs**. It takes too long for the mail-back rental canisters to be returned to Cedar Grove, and we are losing the opportunity to make more money for SNHA on these rentals. On several days this summer, we had no Wild Ideas bear canisters to rent, especially the small ones, which we ran out of first. I would conservatively estimate that we could have collected \$500 more in SNHA funds if we had more Wild Ideas canisters to rent. An alternative would be to ask SNHA to purchase more Wild Ideas bear canisters so we have more rental stock here.
- **Develop more cohesive, comprehensive, and helpful interpretive displays for day visitors at Road's End**. This summer, I put up interpretive signs at Road's End, including those supplied by the Cedar Grove Visitor Center and other signs I found in the drawers of the desk at Road's End. I also printed out further backcountry information (e.g., about climbing Mt. Whitney) that would be useful to visitors and posted it in inside RE. However, all of this information was posted randomly, wherever we had space. It would

be good to work with Ken Hires, who has himself suggested this project to me, to create better interpretive displays at RE. Otherwise, we are missing the chance to better inform and educate thousands of visitors at RE each month.

- **The bear box location maps at Road's End are inaccurate and need to be updated.**
- **Ask all RE staff use the counter-top displays for SNHA maps.** I found this increased sales significantly, as did stocking Zumwalt Meadow trail guides and SNHA water bottles at Road's End. Next year, we should create a sign for Road's End to let people know that we do sell merchandise here. I think we're losing sales because people don't realize that we sell anything. Visitors often ask me about buying small souvenirs, too.
- **Work with the Cedar Grove V.C. to rent bear canisters directly from the C.G. blockhouse,** so that visitors have a way to rent bear canisters the night before their trip after RE closes. Otherwise, visitors end up paying \$3/night to rent them from the C.G. market, and we're losing another opportunity to make more money for SNHA.
- **The Road's End station needs to be cleaned more often by all staff** (e.g., taking out the garbage and recycling, sweeping, wiping down the register and desktop, etc.).
- **Bring down more orange cones to protect no-parking zones on weekends/holidays.**
- **Ask all RE staff to patrol more consistently for food storage violations.** This year, patrols of the day lot and at Muir Beach were done infrequently, although patrols of the backcountry lot for overdue hikers was consistently done on a daily basis. It would be great if all staff patrolled the day-use lot and the beach at least once a day, writing food storage violation notices and doing bear education talks at Muir Beach. Of course, this isn't possible when Road's End is extremely busy, but 80% of the time it's a doable plan. In addition, these patrols could be used to **do more litter pick-up** at Road's End. I received many visitor complaints about trash at Muir Rock and Beach this summer.
- **Conduct stock permit training immediately at the beginning of the season.**
- **Eliminate some of the problems with the accuracy of our record keeping.** Encourage all staff to double-check their statistical record-keeping and daily shift reports during the next shift that they are on duty at RE. Also, encourage staff to ensure that the actual number of permits sold matches what's on the cash register Z-tape. Also, double-check that the total number of nights on the right-hand side of the permit matches the entry and exit dates written on the left-hand side. For reservation permits that are issued not in the original party's name, the reservation number must also be written clearly on the permit.
- **Give staff more follow-up training on permit writing, filling out bear canister rental forms and receipts, and how to accurately keep statistics.** Although this may only have been an issue with one employee, I imagine it's something that happens every year. Follow-up training by a supervisor after conducting spot checks or permits, daily shift reports, credit card receipts, and statistics sheets should be done individually in early June. This will eliminate hours of error-correcting paperwork that I did every week.
- **Give staff better training on providing EMS** (e.g., how to clearly fill out EMS run sheets, what the procedure is for handing visitors who request medical care in the front and back country, how to drive the ambulance for those who haven't done so before).
- **Give staff training on how to conduct backcountry patrols** (e.g., go over the helpful and detailed guidelines that Ned Kelleher wrote about years ago and that we still have in one of the binders on the desk at Road's End).
- **Conduct inventory of backcountry caches at the start of the season,** so that trailhead and LE staff don't haul along more gear than they have to on backcountry trips.

- **Encourage all staff to use the Road's End log book.** Although I created and started using a log book at RE, which included a daily journal, list of things to do, and list of supplies needed, I was the only one who used it, so I stopped doing so. If all staff were on board with using a log book, it would be an excellent communication tool. The log book would eliminate the unreliable method of leaving notes for each other about important information, which can't be passed on verbally because staff rarely see each other. Throughout this season, communication about important issues was haphazard at best
- **Print out weather forecasts and discussion from NOAA website.** I did this at home every few nights on my own time, because the dial-up Internet access in Cedar Grove doesn't allow us to access the NOAA website in the C.G. Ranger Office. Also, there wasn't time to stop by the office and do this except on my weekly admin. day, and RE really should post more up-to-date weather reports on a regular, consistent basis.
- **Figure out how to make the best use of the GS-5 weekly admin. day.** Although I always found enough to do to fill eight hours on my admin. days, not all of that time was spent processing fees. I also checked NPS e-mail, filled out and sent in the per diem forms for all C.G. staff's backcountry trips, took out the trash and recycling from the R.O., restocked supplies at Road's End (incl. Bear Vaults, photocopies, change fund), liaised with the Wilderness Office and SNHA, returned general inquiry phone calls from the R.O. voicemail, wrote up and distributed the C.G. trail conditions update form, compiled backcountry and Road's End statistics on a semi-monthly basis, sent white copies of wilderness permits (which I double-checked and corrected) to the W.O., double-checked statistics and daily shift reports for all staff at Road's End, and assisted C.G. L.E. with any miscellaneous tasks, including filing, driving the ambulance, etc. That said, there were a lot of admin. tasks that needed to be done on other days (e.g., getting supplies, picking up permit logs, returning and picking up new bear vaults), which I ended up trying to squeeze into the end of a regular work day with unpaid overtime. This wasn't a lot of time (probably no more than 20 min./week), but it would've been helpful to spread out the admin. hours over the week, instead of putting them all in one day. I don't know how to schedule that better, though. Doing a half-admin day at the beginning or end of a B.C. trip is unrealistic, because I was usually too tired to go back to the office. Also, with 2- or 3-day hiking trips, it's difficult to hike out in just half a day. If admin. hours are allotted to just one day per week (instead of two half-days), it would be good if L.E. could leave list of extra tasks that the RE GS-5 could work on to fill the admin time. Last, if the admin. day were scheduled for a weekend day, the RE GS-5 could spend the morning helping staff issue permits at Road's End, then the rest of the day on other tasks. We often needed an extra pair of hand in the a.m. on weekends during July and August.
- **Road's End staff should not have to use their own vehicles to get to work.** I know you fought this battle last year, Ned, and I just want to reiterate how much we appreciated having a government vehicle to drive, even if it was one that seemed to want to die.



### **The Busiest and Most Profitable Days at Road's End in 2007:**

- On Sept. 1st, 2007, we issued a total of 23 permits for 65 backpackers leaving that day, plus 5 advance permits for the following day. Approximately 80 people received wilderness minimum impact talks that day at Road's End.
- I spoke with 184 day visitors at Road's End on Sept. 2nd., 2007.
- Our biggest day at Road's End for NPS fee collection was Sept. 1st, 2007, when we sold \$217.50 worth of wilderness permits.
- Our biggest day for SNHA fee collection was July 29th, 2007, when we collected \$163.65 by selling SNHA merchandise and renting bear canisters.

### **News of the Weird & the Strange:**

- Gunshots were reported several times by visitors earlier this summer, when in fact it was the Cedar Grove ex-ambulance being driven by staff up and down the canyon road. The ambulance gave up the ghost at Zumwalt Meadow, which would have been a scenic final resting place for it. But it was rescued, repaired and back in service a short time later.
- We had a bear in the Road's End area lying under a picnic table eating dirt. He refused to move until 413 showed up with a hazing rifle. But it was weird how much that bear seemed to love eating that dirt! My theory: Visitors had spilled a lot of Coca-Cola there.