

LeConte Ranger Station Year End Report 08

By: Bob Kenan

LeConte Ranger Station Year End Report 08 – Kenan

General Summary

The season began on June 4 with three days of Wilderness training. I then hiked into the Monarch Ranger Station to get it ready for the season. On June 20th, I hiked into LeConte from South Lake. There was a significant amount of snow on the areas passes, so a first priority was to get up to Muir and Mather Passes to check the conditions. There was a ½ mile of snow south of Helen Lake and about ½ mile of snow on the north side of Mather Pass. Conditions were difficult for hikers on both of these passes. Palisade Creek was a hazardous crossing at the Middle Fork of the Kings and the South Fork of the Kings was a hazardous crossing in Upper Basin.

In the early season in the backcountry the park radio was frequently not working properly and relays were set up with the backcountry rangers. When Pete Clum was in Bench Lake, he was able to relay my itinerary to George Durkee. George was able to get out on his base station from Charlotte to relay information for the other backcountry rangers. After getting into LeConte, it took several weeks before the radio system began working reliably.

I contacted about 34 kayakers the first of July that were doing the trip down the Middle Fork of the Kings. In talking with Keith Waterfall of Inyo National Forest, he estimates that 70 kayakers did the Middle Fork trip this season.

The Kings Trail Crew and the Upper Leconte Frog crew were in the area this summer. I made contact with both of these crews this summer on a regular basis.

The story of the summer would be the Tehipite Fire that started around July 20 and slowly burned for a couple of months. After Labor Day, the fire reached the “heavy fuels” of lower Crown Valley and exploded with heavy

smoke that filled LeConte Canyon with thick smoke on a daily basis for the last three weeks of the season. The air quality was very unhealthy.

Many contacts were made with stock groups coming into the area and stock grazing data was kept recorded throughout the season. The areas drift fences were vandalized on several occasions this season. Someone knocked down a segment of the fence on either side of the gate three different times. This was quickly repaired each time by the trail crew.

My primary focus this season was to stay active throughout the season with trail patrols. I was in Dusy Basin this season on 11 occasions; up on Muir Pass four times, Simpson Meadow three times, Mather Pass and Upper Basin twice. I did a survey that showed a backcountry ranger is significantly more productive when he is hiking actively throughout the season.

This season I was not commissioned Law Enforcement. I was able to handle the minimum impact violations with verbal warnings. More serious violations could be cited by gathering the needed information and getting it to my supervisor.

I assisted many visitors in a variety of ways this summer. We are in the visitor assistance business and this is something we do numerous times per day with the visitor contacts that we make.

General Information

Miles hiked – 780

Visitors contacted – 1,472

Verbal warnings – 25

Fire rings removed – 35

Fire rings reduced – 47

Fire rings cleaned - 70

Medivacs - 1 helicopter, 1 stock

Visitor assists - 89

Case cards – 4 (minor medical)

Visitor Contacts

This season I contacted approximately 1,472 visitors. I did an interesting survey in regards to visitor contacts. During the peak of the hiking season, I compared the number of hikers contacted one day hiking from Palisade Lakes to LeConte Ranger Station and the next day, my lieu day, working around the ranger station. On my hiking day, I contacted 42 visitors and on my station day I contacted 4 visitors. On the trail on my station lieu day, there would have been at least 40 hikers that past by the ranger station. Certainly there are days that we need to be at the station, but we are significantly more productive making visitor contacts when we are hiking around our area.

Verbal warnings were given for minimum impact violation. The most common violation was setting tents up on vegetated soils. I had reports from hikers about visitors using soap in the river. Trash was collected from 70 fire rings throughout the season. Visitors continue to build illegal fire rings above 10,000 feet.

On July 6, I made contact with the first kayakers of the season in LeConte Canyon. These kayakers are running the Middle Fork of the Kings from LeConte down to the confluence of the Middle Fork and the South Fork of the Kings. Over the next few days, I contacted a total of 34 kayakers in about seven different groups. Permit information was obtained and recorded from all groups contacted. A variety of these groups were contacted while patrolling to Bishop Pass. (see photo report)

On July 8, I made contact with Inyo Wilderness coordinator, Keith Waterfall on the east side of Bishop Pass. He and I contacted 9 kayakers that did not have a permit. Since we were in the National Forest, Keith handled the law enforcement and required them to hike back out and get a permit from Bishop. Keith allowed them to leave their kayaks along the trail overnight.

The vast majority of contacts made throughout the season are “information providing”. When I see someone on the trail, I will try to find out what they are doing for their trip, so I can give them as much information possible that may assist them on their hike.

Visitor Assists

I assisted visitors in many ways throughout the season. These assists include the following: relaying messages through dispatch, giving away emergency food, advising them on their trip (routes, camping places, etc.), giving out extra tp, giving out extra white gas for stoves, securing gear at the station while they went out for a resupply, and many more ways to help.

How many times did I assist visitors this season? Maybe ten times a day over my three and a half months working the area this summer. Visitor assists is something we do every day and is one of the most important services that we provide as backcountry rangers. A simple thing such as providing information on a good place to camp or recommending that they break up the eleven mile uphill climb over Mather Pass into two days can be information that helps them in a big way. It is a great pleasure to be able help out the park visitor. As wilderness rangers we thrive off of helping people.

Mt. Goode SAR

On July 19, the Mt. Goode search began for a forty year old climber that came in from South Lake to climb Mt. Goode and some of the other surrounding peaks. He was a solo hiker with no technical gear. I was picked up by helicopter (b) and flown to the west side of Mt. Goode to search the area for a day. The park continued to search for a few days after that, as we expected that if he were dead or injured that he would be in the Inyo side of the Crest. The Inyo contributed a massive search effort utilizing Forest Service Crews and Inyo Sheriffs SAR teams to comb the area. After about a week, the Inyo discontinued their search effort after finding no trace.

Evidently the family of the missing person continued to search with friends and family. With their continued search, after about a week more of

searching, his body was found in the Inyo, below a peak on the south side of Mt. Goode.

Natural Resources

(b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) has had an incredible transformation in (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) restoration over the last five years. The fish eradication project at this lake and additional upstream lakes has proven to be an enormous success. On July 13, I observed this lake area and was astonished at all of the (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) everywhere. They were sunning themselves on the lake shore in what seemed to be family groups. (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) were swimming in masses in the lake and inlet and outlet streams. Hikers I encountered were equally excited about all the (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) and interested in learning about the parks resource management project.

Wildlife Observations

Over the years with in the backcountry I've seen much wildlife. Some of these observations include: wolverine, fisher, pine martin, long and short tail weasel, bear, white tailed jackrabbit, otter, and coyote; to name some of the more interesting mammals. This summer I saw a white tailed jackrabbit in Dusy Basin and had a report of another one seen in Dusy Basin reported to me by a backpacker. I saw a small bear on Palisade Creek and several other bears in Simpson Meadow. There were numerous reports of bears seen in the LeConte area. I had no report of bears getting food from visitors in the area this season.

I had a report by two hikers of three "aquatic animals" seen in Helen Lake. I was in the area the next day and looked, but saw nothing in Helen Lake. The report by the hikers was that the three animals were swimming in Helen Lake and diving for food. They said that the animals were not far from the shore and actually looked at them with interest but not fear. What could this observation be? Could they have seen otters in Helen Lake? I believe these hikers to be credible and will be "wondering" what they actually saw in the

lake. I personally saw an otter years ago on Dougherty Creek. I did get a very good look from only a few feet away.

Resource Management Project

The 2nd Lake in Upper Leconte Canyon had several large rock walls built by visitors around the campsites. Work was done to restore this area and renaturalize the campsites. (see photo report) Minimum impact mandates that “improvements” such as rock walls not be made. Visitors are not supposed to build rock walls at campsites. In the past we have allowed a widespread building of rock walls all over the high country of the park and this has gotten out of control. I am recommending that next season each ranger start to inventory the “improvements” in their areas. This would help us, similar to the campsite inventory, to begin to restore these areas over the next few years.

Backcountry Facilities

The LeConte Ranger Station with the new metal roof and new paint is in fine shape. Some interior work could be done on the ceiling. Ongoing maintenance of keeping it organized/clean and well supplied with needed gear and equipment will be the primary focus over the next few years.

An outhouse hole needs to be dug at the beginning of next season. Metal support bracing needs to be used to make a foundation. This will help to stabilize the structure to keep it from falling over with heavy snow in the winter.

I was on Muir Pass four times this season cleaning in and around the Muir Hut. While contacting visitors, I noticed that often the door was left open when they would look inside. I put a laminated sign on the door that stated “keep door closed and latched”. This should be there at all times to prevent animals from getting inside. The area rangers should make sure this sign is there before leaving in the fall to help prevent the door being left open and snow and ice accumulating preventing the door from being closed.

I did repair work on the Simpson Meadow Ranger Station this season. A bear attempted to break into the front door by clawing his way in. (see photo

report) Fortunately, I anticipated this and had attached some aluminum sheeting a few years ago on the door to help prevent this from happening. I repaired the damage with additional sheeting on the door. Also, part of the roof cedar shingles were pulled up, as this was possibly another effort by the bear to get into the station. These shingles were nailed down and repaired.

There are some additional maintenance needs on the Simpson Station. Some of the shingles around the edge of the roof need to be replaced. A bundle of cedar shingles would be sufficient for this repair. Also, the exterior of the log cabin could use a good soaking of wood preservative. A five gallon bucket of this compound would be enough to get the job done.

Kings Trail Crew Camp

In August, the Kings Trail Crew came to LeConte and set up camp near Big Pete Meadow. They did a good job in selecting an established camp just below the main stock camp on the south side of Big Pete. This allowed numerous pack trips to be able to use the existing stock camp and met the primary guidelines for proper camp selection which were: the camp was hidden from the trail and the camp was no and it was an established camp.

The camp allowed the use of the primary stock camp in the area. The trail crew was reduced to a crew of three for most of their time in LeConte. These guys worked very hard and were friendly to the backpackers passing their way.

Trails

This season the trail crew did maintenance from Mather Pass to Muir Pass. They cleared the trail of 22 trees in Palisade Canyon. The trails in the area are overall in good shape. A frequent comment that hikers make coming into the park from the north is that the trails are noticeably much better in Kings Canyon than out of the park. There are a few large rocks on the Golden

Staircase that need to be moved. Mather Pass on the south side needs some work. There is one spot that has eroded badly and looks to be unsafe for stock.

I looked at the gorge south of Helen Lake this summer with #^(b) and #^{(b) (7)}. We were looking to see if there would be a way to reroute the trail through this area by pulling it away from the creek. Cameron, Jack and I determined that it would be a very difficult thing to do requiring a lot of blasting. The gorge is primarily a problem in the early season when it is packed with snow fields. After the snow melts, it really does not present that much difficulty for hikers.

Posting Trail Closure Signs

The Tehipite Fire required posting trail closure signs to prevent visitors from travelling from Simpson Meadow to Tehipite Valley. It was important to catch these hikers who may not have heard about the closure of this trail at the trailhead to prevent them from hiking into a potentially dangerous situation. I used the standard "Warning : Fire Operations" sign from fire management and put a note on it explaining what trail was closed.(see photo report) This sign was then laminated to protect it from the weather. The sign was posted in four different locations: at the Dusy Basin cutoff near the ranger station, at Palisade Creek and the Middle Fork, along the trail just east of Simpson Meadow and at the sign post in Simpson where "the bitch" trail begins. Every effort was made to check these signs throughout the season to make sure that they stayed in place. At the main cutoff in Simpson, the sign was knocked off the signpost twice and was replaced. I'm suspecting that the bear had something to do with this.

Collapsible Bear Boxes

This summer I GPSed the trail crew boxes in my area and posted the locations on an area infrastructure map. I am recommending that next season rangers around the backcountry do the same so we can pinpoint the location of all of these boxes.

This season the Kings Trail Crew in Upper LeConte used an aluminum collapsible bear box that worked extremely well for them (see photo report) The box was packed in on a mule and took only minutes to assemble. It is modeled after our standard bear box and it is the same size. In discussing the use of this box in the future with (b) [REDACTED], he hopes to be able to remove some of the Knaack boxes and use the collapsible box in those locations in the future. Also, the metal Pack boxes were used for food storage by this crew extensively this summer. As a result, for their camp, they had no need for a large Knaack box. At the end of the season, this collapsible box could be packed out or hidden nearby, if plans were to have a camp in the same location for next season.

Camp Areas

As a result of completing the Campsite Inventory we have an excellent grasp on campsite locations throughout. We have a substantial number of illegal fire rings park wide that need to be cleaned up. In Upper Basin alone, for example, 40 illegal fire rings were inventoried above 10,000 feet. Campsite inventory maps should be made available to the backcountry rangers so they can use this as a guide for cleaning up these sites in their areas.

Permit System

Upon making contact with hikers this summer, I would always ask if they had a permit. I did not contact anyone this summer that did not have a permit. It is an inconvenience for hikers to drop their pack to dig out their permit. I do recommend that we go back to the type of permit that is attached to the outside of the backpack. It would make it much easier with our compliance checks for hikers to not have to drop their packs to get their permit.

The most common minimum impact violation is setting up tents on vegetated soils. In checking permits this summer, those hikers that came in over Bishop Pass would have SEKI's minimum impact sheet. This makes the statement: **no camping on vegetated soils**. But those hikers coming from Yosemite would have a different minimum impact sheet that stated: **Use existing campsites only**. This discrepancy in the way the regulations were presented to hikers created some confusion. We need to have the same minimum impact sheet for all hikers coming into the park and since camping on the grass is the main problem, we need to say it that way.

New Signs Needed

I have three signs in my area that need to be replaced due to them being marked up by park visitors.

- 1) At the station cutoff. (see photo report)
- 2) At Palisade Creek and the Middle Fork of the Kings Junction. (see photo report)
- 3) Tehipite cutoff in Simpson Meadow. (This sign would say "Tehipite Valley 12 miles") and the arrow on the sign would be to the "right".

Communications

The middle of August I received a satellite phone from my supervisor. I found the phone to be a great asset in my communications. I was able to make administrative calls to: Dave Gordon, Debbie Brenchley, and Ned Kelleher. Also, the phone allowed me to communicate with Dave Gordon at McClure. This was valuable since the park radio does not work from LeConte to McClure with the two different repeaters. These calls opened up a new link in communications that the radio does not provide. The satellite phone works better in the high basins than in LeConte Canyon. A special antenna that is available could help remedy the canyon interference problems.

Weekly Reports

Weekly reports have been a great new way for us to keep our managers posted on our weekly work productivity. They were also effectively used in management meetings to address issues and problems in the backcountry throughout the season as opposed to waiting in the fall when the backcountry ranger seasonal reports were available. I have included my weekly reports in a memo form to help illustrate my work productivity throughout the season.

Tehipite Fire

I would say that the “event of the season” affecting LeConte Canyon and the surrounding area would be the Tehipite Fire. The fire began around the middle of July and after a couple of weeks it flared up. The park then implemented a massive suppression effort with fire crews and helicopter water drops. This suppression effort lasted about a week and contained the fire on the ridge along the trail to Gnat Meadow and on the west side of Crown Creek. There the fire smoldered and crept up the ridge for about a month.

After Labor Day the fire reached the heavy fuels of lower Crown Valley and Kettle Ridge and began to put out an enormous amount of smoke. This smoke with the normal north easterly air movement flowed right into LeConte Canyon and the surrounding areas. The smoke was so thick from time to time that I could not see Langille or the Black Divide from lower Dusy Basin.

With that said, the smoke in the area impacted many trips by park visitors. Some of them decided not to go on and bailed out over Bishop Pass. Much of my effort, in making contacts with visitors about the fire was to encourage them to continue and advise them on their best way of modifying their trip to get through the “smoke” area most effectively. For example, hikers that were planning to go into Ionian basin were encouraged to avoid that area because the smoke would consistently be thick there. When the smoke was bad, I encouraged hikers to hike through LeConte in a day and camp either in Palisade Creek or Upper LeConte where the smoke was less thick. I would inform north or southbound hikers that once they got over Muir Pass into Evolution country or over Mather Pass into Upper Basin, that they would be through most of the problem smoke area.

Medicals

Six times I had medical incidents this season. I had one helicopter medivac and one stock medivac for sick visitors. Four case cards were used to document minor medical and release incidents.

Hiking Patrol Example

On September 10, went on a six day patrol from LeConte Canyon to McClure Meadow and back to LeConte. It was a beautiful patrol that allowed me to get out of the LeConte Canyon fire smoke for a few days and help cover the area to the north while Dave Gordon was out of the backcountry for a few days. To demonstrate the value of hiking patrols, I’ve outlined the work done on this patrol below.

- I contacted 30 park visitors on the day that I travelled from Upper LeConte Canyon to Sapphire Lake. I contacted 72 visitors total for the trip.
- I relayed an important message for park packer # (b) to dispatch as he was having trouble getting out from the Goddard Bridge.
- I made contact with Packer Mike Morgan at Colby Meadow. He was on a full service trip with a group of 4 from Piute Pass to Bishop Pass and out to South Lake. He was originally planning to camp at Little Pete Meadow. I asked him if he wouldn't mind camping at Big Pete, since it would reduce the impact at Little Pete Meadow.
- I cleaned up two illegal fire rings, one at Sapphire Lake and another at Lake 11106.
- I cleaned up human poop on top of the ground, no attempt to cover by donor, near Sapphire Lake.
- Made numerous visitor assists in directing people about their trips and in particular in best how to plan around the Tehipite fire smoke that was very thick and unhealthy at the time in LeConte Canyon.
- I had a minor medical assessment for a visitor at the McClure Ranger Station.
- Cleaned in and around the Muir Hut and posted a laminated note on the door that stated "keep door closed and latched".
- And on the way home I made contact with the Kings Trail Crew in upper LeConte at their work project. We discussed logistics for our demobe that would be happening in a couple of days.

The trail is the pulse of what's happening in the backcountry. This is an example of just one trail patrol and the type of productive work we accomplish while patrolling our areas.

LeConte Station Needs List for 09

Katadyn ceramic filters - #2

Small and large plastic bags - #30 each

TP - #15 rolls

O2 cylinders – 2 jumbo and one small

Nonrebreather masks – 4

3 gallon propane tank

Day pack

Station sleeping bag

Black plastic (heavy) – 15 square feet

5 gallon cubitainer – (for hauling water from river)

Drinking glasses – large/plastic – #3

Coffee pot #1

Dish soap and laundry soap

Gunny sacks - #15

Simpson Meadow Ranger Stations Needs for 09

5 gallons cedar log wood preservative.....large paint brush

2 gallons white gas

10 tp.....5 gunny sacs.....20 large and small plastic bags

1 bundle of cedar shingles.....approx. 25

Memo 1

Backcountry Ranger Patrol Areas

Certainly one of the most important jobs we do as backcountry rangers is covering our patrol areas. Without getting into the required areas, illegal fire rings will accumulate along with trash and other problems that inevitably will develop without regular patrol and cleanup. Examples of fundamental patrol areas for each station are listed below.

Charlotte Lake

Gardner Basin, Junction Meadow, East Lake and Lake Reflection, Vidette Lakes, Forester Pass, Center Basin and cutoff, Kearsarge Lakes and Glen Pass.

Rae Lakes

60 Lakes Basin, Dragon Lake, Baxter Lakes, Woods Lake Basin, Woods Creek Crossing, Rae Lakes, and Twin Lakes.

Bench Lake Station

Woods Lake Basin, Upper Basin, Palisades Lakes, Lake Basin, South Fork Kings to Cartridge Pass cutoff, Bench Lake and Lake Marjorie to Pinchot Pass.

LeConte Station

Upper LeConte to Muir Pass, Middle Fork Kings to Simpson Meadow, Dusy Basin, Palisade Creek to Palisade Lakes and Mather Pass.

McClure Station

Evolution Basin up to Muir Pass, Darwin Bench, Evolution Valley, Goddard Canyon, Piute Creek, Davis and McGee Lakes.

How good a job are we doing covering the backcountry? This is something that can be evaluated very clearly at the end of each season.

Memo 2

Outfitters and Stock Use

This season the SYMG (Southern Yosemite Mountain Guides) came through the area on a trip that went through the park from Evolution Country to Rock Creek and out Horseshoe Meadows. They had 9 paid guests and three leaders. They chose high camps such as Palisade Lakes and Twin Lakes where they camped and grazed their stock.

The guests paid in estimate \$3,000 each for the trip. The services that were provided for them were: three guides, a packer hauling their gear from camp to camp so they hiked with light day packs, meals prepared for them every evening.

In doing the math, there is a lot of money to be made as an outfitter. After all of the expenses were paid: packer, guides salaries, food and transportation to and from the trailheads, the owner of the company could make at least \$15,000 to \$20,000 on each 10 day trip. If they are able to put together 10 trips per year profits are good. This summer with the SYMG trip the goal of the outfitter was to give them the best trip for the money and certainly camping in the high elevation lake basins is the best the Sierra has to offer.

Over the years in the backcountry, I have observed outfitters camping and grazing stock in numerous high elevation basins. Examples in the Kings would be: Upper LeConte Lake (frog research area), Palisade Lakes, Twin Lakes, Bench Lake and Volcanic Lakes. In the past I have observed stock being grazed in all of these areas.

In contrast I made contact with Mike Morgan this season at Colby Meadow. Mike had a group of four that were a walking party. He packed

change our signs out, they will continue to be marked up and will cost significantly more in the long run than it will to going ahead and making the sign change now.

Also, for next season, we need to do a park wide inspection of all of our signs, and replace the signs that are defaced. As I have observed in Kings Canyon, there are many signs that need to be replaced. If we choose a new sign that looks similar to the current sign, we would be able to replace the marked up signs with the new style and they would blend in just fine. Over a five year period, we could make an effort to change out all of the signs in the backcountry with the new design.

Memo 5

Guidelines for Park Crew Camps

A simple list for guidelines for park crew camps would help to prevent these camps being put in inappropriate places, which I have observed being done numerous times in the past.

Camps are to be hidden from view from the trail.

Camps are not to be put in heavy use areas.

Research camps should have a two to three year limit in one particular location. And similar to how a ranger can close a meadow, if they determine that there is excessive grazing, a ranger should have the ability to close a camp if the impact from that camp has created too much impact.

Memo 6

Hiking Patrol Survey

I did an interesting survey in regards to visitor contacts. During the peak of the hiking season, I compared the number of hikers contacted one day hiking from Palisade Lakes to LeConte Ranger Station and the next day, my lieu day, working around the ranger station. On my hiking day, I contacted 42 visitors and on my station day I contacted 4. Out on the trail on my station lieu day, there would have been at least 40 hikers that past by the ranger station.

The point is clearly made that we are at our most productive time with making visitor contacts when we are out on the trail, either day hiking or doing an extended patrol. Conversely, we are at our least productive time when we are at the ranger station in regards to making visitor contacts. Certainly there are days that we need to be at the station which would be: resting from a long patrol, station chores, laundry and report writing. It is very clear the most productive ranger is the one patrolling their area on a regular/relentless basis.

Memo 7

Dusy Basin

(b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B)

The Dusy Basin (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) camp has created excessive impact at the upper lake in Dusy Basin. I wrote in my LeConte Year End Report 03 that this large established camp continues to be “blight” on the area. And after five more years of the camp being here the conditions have gotten significantly worse. Continued problems created by this camp include the following:

*There are only a few good camping sites around this lake and visitors created additional impact at this fragile lake by having to select a less appropriate campsite.

*This lake is the most used camp area in Dusy Basin. This is because it is close to the pass and because of the “water situation” in the basin. By August all side streams in the upper part of the basin have dried up and the only available water is in the lakes.

*The lake area has an unacceptable level of special use trails around the lake shore. Some camps around the lake are impacting the fragile lakeshore grasses. And a big part of what we try to regulate in the backcountry for park visitors is a “feeling” of true wilderness. When there is an established camp like this in such a high use area with the metal box, several tents, lawn chairs, and all of the plastic container boxes, it takes away from the feeling of this being a true wilderness.

I am definitely recommending that this camp be removed next season, so we can start to restore this area. In the future, Sierra Crest management needs to be the ones to select the camping areas for research crews like this to avoid this type of problem in the future. And a campsite review should be done by the area ranger at the end of the season to assist management in the decision making process. Also, in the future there should be a three year limit on camps of this type. This would help to prevent excessive impact that in this case has gone on for six years.

Memo 8

Upper LeConte (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B)

In speaking with Danny Boiano this summer, he assured me that the metal box at this research camp would be removed and the area would be rehabbed. The park (b) (3) (A) crews have done a good job at minimizing impact in this area, as this camp will be easily rehabbed. I would like to assist next season in

rehabbing this camp area and fully support that the box should be removed next season.

Memo 9

Bear Boxes

I think it would be a huge mistake to take out all of the bear boxes. Many hikers after getting a resupply have a “spill over” where they can’t get all of their food into the bear canisters. That is after a few days of hiking they eat enough to be able to get all of their food into their canister. Last summer in hiking through the Woods Creek crossing area, I observed a lot of people using the bear boxes to put scent items, even though they had canisters. The boxes have worked because they are convenient and easy to use. They have helped us to direct park visitors to the established camp areas. They have been our first “road tested” means of keeping food from the bears and have proven to be an enormous success.

The canisters need to be thought of as a compliment to the bear boxes and not a total substitute for boxes. I interviewed many hikers this summer in regards to the future of the bear boxes and everyone agreed with me that it would be important to keep the boxes.

In addition, I talked with the Cedar Grove bear technicians and in certain areas this summer, the bears are still getting food. This seems to be mostly in areas like Paradise Valley and Junction Meadow, where campers are walking away from food left out at their campsites. Let’s face it, some visitors are very “challenged” when it comes to proper food storage. There will always be some hikers who will refuse to carry a canister and leaving the boxes will be an additional backup for those visitors.

With that said, there are a few boxes that do need to be removed.

For example, there are some camp areas that have received excessive impact from having a bear box in that area. The Rae Lakes peninsula site is an example of this. It is a place that we need to reduce the number of seasonal camping nights significantly because of the fragile nature of the area. This is an area that gets overwhelmed with human waste throughout the season.

I recommend that in order for a box to be removed from the backcountry it needs to pass a checklist and be approved for removal by Sierra Crest management. Questions to ask would be the following:

Does the box create excessive impact to the camping area?

Would the fragile nature of this camping area be substantially improved by removing the box?

Memo 10

Dogs in the Backcountry

We have worked so hard over the years to make a statement to park visitors that we do not tolerate dogs in the backcountry. When I see a dog in the backcountry it is almost always handled by issuing a citation and requiring the park visitor with the dog to exit the nearest point out of the park. Our hard stand has gotten out to people and helped to prevent dogs in the backcountry from getting out of control.

The new special use permit for allowing dogs into the backcountry is a major setback for all of our efforts. It sends the wrong signal to all visitors that pass by a hiker with a dog. Most visitors don't know anything about a special use permit, as all they know is that they see a dog in the backcountry.

So, for example, a special use dog is in the backcountry and goes for a long hike with the special use permit. They pass by 200 park visitors on their trip. Out of these 200 visitors, some of them decide that they want to bring in their dog next time for a trip. No matter how this is evaluated, from a management

standpoint allowing dogs in the backcountry is sending the wrong signal to park visitors and will create a situation that more illegal dogs will be coming into the backcountry.

Memo 11

Station Medical Checklist

In order to assure that all critical medical equipment is available at each station a medical checklist would be helpful. Also, each oxygen cylinder should be checked at the beginning and end of each season. This season out of the three oxygen cylinders at LeConte Station, two were very low and one cylinder did not hold a seal with the regulator. I discovered this with my first medical evacuation of the season. And after taking care of this patient, I was basically out of oxygen for the season.

Station Medical Checklist (example)

- Medical thermometer
- Blood pressure cuff (2)
- Annie kit
- Oxygen cylinders – jumbo 2
- Oxygen cylinder – smaller – for rapid response to patient
 - Non rebreather masks – 3
- Nasal canulas – 4
- Cervical collars – 1 adjustable – 1 small
- Aspirin – one bottle
- Tweezers – 1 large and 1 small
- Traction leg splint

There have been too many times that I have arrived at a station and important medical equipment has not been available. With all that there is to do to close down a station at the end of a season, without a mandatory checklist, these things can be easily forgotten.

Memo 12

Park Work History – For the Record

This was my 34th consecutive season working with Sequoia/Kings. I started working in Cedar Grove in 1975 as a VIP naturalist. In 1976 I was hired as a patrol ranger in Cedar Grove. Over the years I have primarily been a “wilderness” ranger and have been stationed at the following locations: Rock Creek, Little 5, Crabtree, Tyndall, Charlotte, Volcanic Lakes, Roaring River, Ranger Lake, Rae Lakes, Bench Lake, Monarch Divide, Simpson Meadow, LeConte Canyon, and McClure Meadow.

Other positions I’ve held in the park include: Roads End supervisor, Road Patrol Ranger, Emergency Fire fighter, Campground ranger, Interpreter, Resource Management Technician (blister rust survey and campsite inventory). I have an unsurpassed knowledge of Sequoia/Kings backcountry. My desire is to continue working with the park for a number of more years.

Memo 13

Last season I worked on the campsite inventory project hiking all over Kings Canyon backcountry. The zones surveyed throughout the season included: Kid Lakes, East Glacier Lakes, Bench Lake, Lake Marjorie, JMT South Fork Kings, Above Paradise, Castle Domes, Martha Lake, Taboose Pass, Center Basin, North of Forester, Upper 60 Lakes, Lower 60 Lakes, Granite Basin Trail, South Granite Basin, Lower Tent Meadow, Kennedy Pass, West Ferguson Canyon, Ranger Lake, Tehipite Valley, Panther Gap, and Alta Meadow. I covered around 700 miles of backcountry patrol and rehabbed over 100 illegal fire rings.

I was surprised at all of the illegal fire rings found all over the backcountry. In Upper Basin for example, 40 illegal fire rings were found. Next season we need to focus on cleaning up these fire rings. We have the campsite inventory maps to use as a reference (see map in back of report) Also, hikers tend to build fire rings in the same places, so these areas should be checked on a regular basis.

Memo 14

Weekly Reports for the Season

Weekly reports were a great new addition to our communications this season. They helped to show management on a weekly basis our work activity and accomplishments for the week.

June 6-13

Hike up to the Monarch Station and work digging out the station boxes from 4 to 5 feet of snow.

Uncover the boxes and organize station gear and prepare station garbage to go out.

Set up station solar unit and inventory station needs for the season.

Trail reports called in for Granite Basin, Granite Pass and the Lip of Granite.

June 13-20

Buy food and supplies for the season.

Box and weigh food and supplies at the Cedar Grove cache to prepare to go in for the season.

EMT refresher for three days at Beatle Rock.

Drive to Bishop and hike in over Bishop Pass.

June 27- July 4

Helicopter ^(b)_{(7)(F)} brings in supplies and organizes station.

Patrol to Mather Pass and Simpson Meadow.

Organize Simpson Meadow Station and repair front door from bear damage.

Clean litter from around the station area and call in trail reports.

July 4 – 11

Patrol Simpson to LeConte, Dusy Basin and South Lake.

Hasty search for a separated hiker and found.

Contact first of the season kayakers.

Start search on Mt. Goode for lost hiker.

July 11-18

Patrols to Upper LeConte, Palisade Creek, and Hector Lake

Helicopter Medivac for sick hiker.

Put up area drift fences.

Campsite rehab in Upper LeConte and Palisade Creek.

Give food to needy hikers.

July 18-25

Patrols to Hestor Lake, Dusy Basin, South Lake, Palisade Creek and Cataract Creek.

Assist Kings Trail Crew in Setting up camp.

Contact Rainbow Pack Station Packers.

Tehipite Fire begins.

Contact Upper LeConte (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (b) crews.

July 27-August 1

Contacted 7 Boy Scout Troups with groups ranging from 5 to 10.

Someone vandalized both the Big Pete and Ladder drift fences as this was quickly repaired by the trail crew.

Relayed 3 messages for hikers through dispatch and gave away emergency food on four occasions.

Hiking patrols to Little Pete, Big Pete, Simpson Meadow and Dusy Basin.

August 2-10

Hiking Patrols north to Muir Pass and south to Mather Pass and Upper Basin. And up Cataract Creek to Amphitheatre Lake Basin.

Contacted (b) (7) and (b) (3) crew at (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B). Discussing ways to protect the successful but fragile research area.

Contacted (b) (7) and (b) (7) and the rest of the Kings Trail Crew in Big Pete Meadow.

Survey with (b) (7) and (b) (7) a hazardous trail area for a possible trail reroute.

The areas meadows were grazed for the first time by Rainbow Pack Station and Park Service Stock.

August 3-10

The hiking season is in full swing and I am contacting up to 50 hikers per day. Have had reports of hikers washing with soap the river.

I am finding illegal fire rings built above 10 feet and rehabbing these sites.

Call in trail reports.

This week was highlighted by the Tehipite fire requiring a trail closure from Simpson Meadow to Tehipite Valley. A big effort was given by fire management to try and contain this fire.

August 11 – 16

The Tehipite Fire Flared p on Thursday pouring thick smoke into LeConte Canyon and Dusy Basin. By Friday the smoke had cleared.

In Dusy Basin observed that the most popular and impacted area for camping is the (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) where the large (b) (3) (A), research camp is located.

Hiking patrols included getting into Dusy Basin twice this week. Over Knapsack and Potluck Passes and down Glacier Creek. Down Palisade Creek and up from Big Pete Meadow to Mt. Goode Pass to Bishop Lake and Bishop Pass.

As a final note, roughly half of the trail signs in my area need to be replaced due to hikers scraping graphitti on the signs. This is vandalism that has occurred over the last few years.

September 7 – 13

Still many hikers on the trail and I am contacting up to 30 hikers per day. Most of these hikers are doing the complete JMT.

Hiking patrols included Dusy Basin and South Lake to LeConte. Muir Pass to McClure Meadow.

The Tehipite Fire rages on starting the week by creating thick smoke that fills most of Kings Canyon Park and the Owens Valley.

September 14 – 20

Hiking patrols from McClure Meadow to Upper Basin and into Lake Basin. Cleanup projects include: in and around the Muir Hut, Upper LeConte Canyon and Palisade Lakes.

Memo 15

Radio Report

Throughout the season as a special project I tested the radio on my patrols. The GPS locations below can be used to pinpoint the locations of the tests. A map is included in the back of the report to show approximate locations of the tests for a reference. From my previous years in this area, I found that the range of the radio had been increased by the conversion to digital. Overall, I was very pleased and found that making the conversion to digital has proven to be a superior format and also proved to extend the life of my radio battery.

Test 1 – Helen Lake area

GPS: (b) (7)(F) [REDACTED]

Transmit: (b) (7)(F) [REDACTED]

Hear: (b) (7)(F) [REDACTED]

Test 2 – Upper LeConte Canyon

GPS: (b) (7)(F) [REDACTED]

Transmit: (b) (7)(F) [REDACTED]

Test 3 – Upper LeConte Camp

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Test 4 – Helen Lake

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F) (a bit scratchy)

Note: In this region I can hear (b) (7)(F) in most cases) At Leconte Ranger Station next to the rock fire place in front of the station I can hear (b) (7) when he is at his base station at (b) (7)(F) But not when I am inside the station.

Test 5 – Lower Palisade Lakes

GPS: not obtained

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Hear: (b) (7)(F)

Test 6 – Upper Palisade Lake

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Hear: (b) (7)(F)

Test 7 – Below Palisade Lake

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Test 8 – Bottom Part of Staircase

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Test 9 – Camp Below Staircase

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Test 10 – Up Cataract Creek

In this area hiking up Cataract Creek to Amphitheatre Lake I test (b) (7)(F) throughout this area and found to be able to transmit the entire region.

Test 11 – Glacier Lake 9 (East of Potluck Pass)

GPS: (b) (7)(F) elevation: 11,724 ft

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Hear: (b) (7)(F)

Test 12 – ½ way up Mt. Goode Basin (east of Big Pete Meadow)

GPS: (b) (7)(F) elevation: 10,409 ft.

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Test 13 – Mt. Goode Basin (west side Mt. Goode)

GPS: (b) (7)(F) elevation: 10,703 ft.

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Hear: (b) (7)(F)

Test 14 – Mt. Goode Pass

GPS: (b) (7)(F) elevation: 12,673 ft.

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Hear: (b) (7)(F)

Test 15 – Below Hestor Lake

GPS: (b) (7)(F) elevation: 10,608

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Hear: (b) (7)(F)

With the new super antennae tests were done below to determine the increased range in the (b) (7)(F) The hope is that the new antennae would work (b) (7)(F) The tests showed that the new antennae increased the range of the radio in this area and (b) (7)(F)

New Antennae Tests Below Helen Lake

Test 16 – Upper LeConte – Just Above Second Lake

Previously “Out of Range”

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Test 17 – Upper LeConte (Below Waterfall)

Previously “Out of Range”

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Test 18 – Upper LeConte (Waterfall base)

Previously “Out of Range”

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Test 19 – Below 1st Lake Below Gorge

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

(b) (7)(F)

Test 20 – 100 yards toward pass

Previously “Out of Range”

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

(b) (7)(F)

Test 21 – Lake Below Gorge

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

(b) (7)(F)

Test 22 – Bottom of Gorge

GPS: (b) (7)(F)

(b) (7)(F)

Test 23 – Top of Gorge

GPS:

(b) (7)(F)

Test 24 – Upper Rainbow Lake

GPS: (b) (7)(F) elevation: 10,803 ft.

Transmit: (b) (7)(F)

Hear: (b) (7)(F)

**BEARPAW MEADOW
END OF SEASON REPORT
2008
Nina Weisman**

A. General Summary

This year the Bearpaw Ranger Station was staffed from June 21 to September 27th. It was a relatively uneventful season although it was punctuated by some heavy rains and a big increase in visitation. As usual I thoroughly enjoyed the patrol area's diversity and hope to return next season.

B. Visitor Services

a. Contacts

i. Backpacker This season there was a marked increase in visitation on the High Sierra Trail. Last season I contacted about 1300 visitors but this year I contacted over 1900 visitors and the trailhead quotas filled up much more often than in past years. I heard that there was an article in the San Francisco Chronicle about the High Sierra Trail that may have encouraged more use. Also, I'm sure the price of gasoline has encouraged vacationers to use their feet more

.

ii. Dayhiker Only a few sturdy dayhikers made it out to Bearpaw this year but I saw many within a few miles of the trailhead. I contacted about 150 dayhikers this season. Only about 15 of them dayhiked all the way out to Bearpaw.

iii. Stock Almost all of the stock I saw this summer was day use only for the twice weekly High Sierra Camp resupply trips. Also the Kaweah Crew was mostly resupplied by stock but those were almost all day trips and the few times they needed to stay overnight, they brought feed and kept the stock tied up at the hitching post behind the ranger station. The Hockett crew used Redwood Meadow early in the season as they always do and turned in their stock night use info. For private stock use I only saw 2 llamas one day at Bearpaw.

b. Law Enforcement This season I issued warnings to 2 groups camped too close to water, 4 warnings for food storage, 1 warning for camping on vegetation, and 3 warnings for no permit when required (had reservations, didn't stop for permit, etc.) During my week of frontcountry patrol, I issued many warnings for various infractions in the Lodgepole area.

c. Citations In the backcountry this season, I issued 2 illegal food storage citations. While in the frontcountry, I issued a citation for driving off road, then arrested an individual for an outstanding warrant, then found out he was the wrong individual so I spend most of a day un-arresting him.

d. Search, Rescue, Medical Incidents

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Evacuation</u>
6/22	Bearpaw	Medical	Helicopter
8/16	Bearpaw	Medical	Helicopter
9/4	Bearpaw	Medical	Helicopter

e. Fatalities – N/A

f. Weather It was an interesting weather year at Bearpaw. In July it rained 10 days in a row, some days quite heavily. There was considerable water damage on parts of the trails and some of the creeks flashed quite high during the downpours. After this episode, it was much more humid than usual for a few weeks and it seemed like a particularly warm summer.

g. Fires There were a few fires burning most of the summer and at times, the smoke in the patrol area was quite bad. The Tehipite fire in Kings Cyn. generated a lot of smoke when the wind direction was favorable. From July through September, there were smoky days because of this fire. In September, a new fire called the Hidden Canyon fire blew up and caused so much smoke that I couldn't see the mountains in front of the cabin. The smoke caused reduced visibility all the way to Kaweah Gap and up to Blackrock Pass. There was one escaped illegal campfire that burned the duff at the Pinto Lake camping area. See firering section for details.

C. Use Patterns

a. Backpackers It seemed to me that visitation was up considerably this year and my contact numbers support that. Also, the trailhead quotas for the High Sierra Trail filled up more often than in the past. Most users were traveling the High Sierra Trail to Mt. Whitney. Some were doing loops through Kaweah Gap and Blackrock Pass. Some had the Bearpaw area as their destination.

b. Stock There was very little private stock use in the patrol area again this season. The only private stock I saw were 2 llamas passing through.

c. Administrative There was some administrative stock use in the Bearpaw patrol area by trail crews, as there usually is every season. They do a good job of monitoring effects of the stock and discussing issues that arise. There is always a lot of administrative backpacker use in the area as many employees explore the High Sierra Trail corridor.

d. Commercial The Horse Corral Pack Station makes numerous day trips into Bearpaw to resupply the High Sierra Camp (twice weekly) and also the Outward Bound groups (few times a summer). Additionally many smaller groups arrange for spot trips into Bearpaw to get a head start on their trip. I saw a few educational groups this season, whose permits I checked. Outward Bound is a regular user of the area. We get very few other commercial users of the area.

D. Natural Resources

a. Bear Activity There were numerous bear sightings all over the backcountry this summer. I did not receive any reports of incidents, however. Many visitors reported bear sightings but it seems that the bear boxes, canisters, and education are working.

There were a couple of bears that frequented the Bearpaw area but they were strongly hazed every time they appeared and soon learned to skirt the perimeter of the camp area.

b. Wildlife I observed many different species of wildlife in the area including Golden Eagles, pikas, grouse, quail, snakes (rubber boa, Mtn. king, garter), goldfinches, tanagers, and heard pileated woodpeckers and spotted owls at Redwood Meadow. The marmot population at Bearpaw seemed as healthy as ever, as did the deer. As usual, the deer and marmots liked to chew on anything salty. This habit is especially bad in the Cliff Creek drainage where anything left out is likely to be chewed to bits.

c. Vegetation Probably due to the extended rains in July, the vegetation was very happy this season. The flowers lasted well into September. I noticed that a very large patch of white-stem raspberries actually had an excellent crop of berries quite close to the Bearpaw Ranger Station. In past years, raspberries at that elevation never seemed to bear fruit, or it was minimal and dry. This season there was a bumper crop of all berries, manzanita, bitter cherry, acorns, thimbleberries, etc. I'm sure this was due to the weather patterns this year. I wonder if the proliferation of raspberries in the Bearpaw area has anything to do with relatively recent climate fluctuations, as it takes a few years for these plants to get established.

The Outward Bound groups again asked for service projects and I enlisted them to help with some cheat grass eradication. The High Sierra Trail has significant amounts of cheat grass all along its length. They did a very good job, as usual.



E. Cultural Resources

a. Prehistoric Sites This year I took a few more photos of the native American sites in (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) in order to document some of the features there. Here is an example.



b. Historic Sites This year the historic cabins in Redwood Meadow got a lot of attention. Thor and his historic preservation crew put on a new roof that they hand split from a downed sequoia in the frontcountry. They found some rot and put in new support beams and did a beautiful job on the roof. It's brighter red now and matches the cabin quite well. The tack room also got a new roof. They also plan to plumb the interior of the cabin for propane for safety issues. They had planned to stay there for 4 weeks but it ended up taking about 6 weeks so they were there most of the summer.

F. Backcountry Facilities

a. Ranger Station

i. Conditions; solar, structural, maintenance completed or needed

The Bearpaw Ranger station is in very good condition and withstands the seasons well. The new water heater is great and it's so nice to not be breathing propane anymore! The solar system is working well but I think that the 3 deep cell marine batteries will be nearing the end of their lifespan soon. They're supposed to last about 5 years in most cases. I think that these will last a little longer but they are weaker than they used to be. There was some discussion about replacing the Bearpaw RS with a new building but I don't see any reason for that. It would be very wasteful

to trash a perfectly good building for a new one, especially in a fragile protected area. The building doesn't leak, is mostly mouseproof, winters well, has plenty of storage, and is easy to maintain.

b. Signs

ii. Conditions, requests The existing signs in the patrol area are fine at this time. I'm still waiting for the no fire signs for Pinto Lake. I found a metal post for that sign so I only need the sign itself. I would like to add a sign in the Hamilton Lake area to clarify the fire regulations. Since there are effectively no fires allowed between Hamilton and the Big Arroyo Crossing, and there is a "No fires above this point" sign in the Big Arroyo, I would like to have a similar sign at Hamilton Lakes. The existing sign says "Hamilton Lakes, No Fires". I plan to move that sign to the other end of the lake where westbound hikers can see it before setting up camp. Then I would like to have the "No fires beyond this point" sign at the lower end of the lake. I think that would reduce the number of illegal and disfiguring fires in both the Hamilton drainage and in 9 Lakes Basin. Right now the fire regulations are complex and most visitors don't read them carefully enough. The addition of one sign would clarify matters in this area.

G. Trails



a. Trail Activities (work accomplished) The trails in the Bearpaw patrol area are extremely well maintained. Occasionally I would remove a small tree here and there that had fallen across a trail. The Kaweah Crew, as always, did an excellent job and was always around to help when needed. Josh Gabik was trail crew leader this year and I'm so glad he finally took the leader position. He has been on the crew for many years and knows the area intimately. There were many urgent jobs this season that he accomplished quickly and efficiently. There were big trees on the trail that the stock uses, trail collapses, storm damage, and other incidents that diverted the crew from their planned work and they took care of everything AND what they had planned. I hope that Josh returns as crew leader for a long time as I really enjoy working with him and his crew and I know who to call when I need assistance.

b. Problem Areas There aren't that many problematic areas in the patrol district, but as always, the Elizabeth Pass trail remains difficult to follow and is extremely steep.

H. Camp Areas

a. Conditions All of the camping areas stayed in fairly good condition this season with frequent patrols and cleanings. The upswing in visitation made for a lot more work cleaning up after people but the areas didn't seem to suffer in most cases. Mehrten Ck. area and Hamilton Lake area look a little trampled but usually recover well after a winter.

b. Sanitation As I mentioned last year, there seems to be a major disconnect in hiker's brains when it comes to packing out their toilet paper. I continue to find large amounts everywhere. We've been working on education, I don't know if it has helped because it may be diluted by the increase in visitation. At Hamilton Lakes, the trail crew dug a new pit toilet. We continue to have discussions to figure out how to safely dispose of all that waste. It's quite a difficult area because of all the granite and the high visitation numbers.

c. Fire Rings This year I did notice an increase in the number of illegal fire rings being constructed. I don't know if many inexperienced people were using the backcountry this year, or if the education was lacking, or both, or some other reason. It was frustrating to continually find them quite near the No Fires signs in various areas. When I left, there were no remaining illegal rings but I'm sure there will be some waiting to be broken up next season. There was one small duff fire started by an illegal fire that wasn't put out at Pinto Lake. Two backpackers spent a whole day working on it, then 3-1-8 stopped by and dug around and put some more water on it. Then I arrived a couple of days later and got a bucket brigade going and we put an enormous amount of water on the area, even though it seemed to be cold. In these duff fires, sometimes they creep along tree roots and I kept finding blackened roots extending beyond the perimeter of the worked area. When we were done, it was clear that an area about 12' X 12' was pure ash, and that was surrounded by smaller ash arms extending out. Next season some time will have to be spent rehabilitating the area but I thought it should be exposed to the winter rains and snows before this occurs.



Pinto Lake illegal fire site 8/08

d. Firewood Availability At the Bearpaw campground, there is still plenty of firewood available from the fuel reduction project. In the other areas where fires are allowed in the patrol area, the wood availability is good. The Pinto Lake area still has limited wood resources and I think the fire ban there should continue.

e. Food Storage Food storage methods were discussed endlessly this season as the specter of possible removal of bear boxes loomed. **The removal of bear boxes is one of the worst ideas I've heard in my many years working at these parks.** When I started here, food storage was a huge problem and bears learned many bad habits and kept people awake all night in the backcountry regularly, got large amounts of food, and frequently had to be destroyed. I think our bear management program has done an excellent job of minimizing this problem and I have watched the transformation since bear boxes were first installed. Now that we have canisters available and many people use them, the reliance on bear boxes has lessened but they are still crucial elements in the varied arsenal of food storage tools. Most people cannot fit all of the food for a week long trip in a canister. What they do is use the food storage lockers for the first night or two of their trip in order to get a little further into the backcountry. Then, they are able to fit the remaining food into their canisters for the rest of their trip. This is an extremely common way people use the lockers. It is extremely burdensome, if not hazardous, for people to attempt to carry 2 canisters per person. I have witnessed this and these people are overloaded and it is definitely a safety hazard. Most of these travelers could have used the lockers for the first day or two and managed their trips well. The reason they didn't, in most cases, was because they didn't realize there were lockers in the area they were visiting. Also,

many novice backpackers use the lockers for their 1 or 2 night trip as their only food storage. These people often are not experienced in packing and are extremely grateful for the lockers because they couldn't have carried a canister. **Even if all hikers are required to carry a canister starting next year, we still need to have these food lockers in place so that overflow food will fit and so that most people will not have to carry two canisters. I would even suggest that the wording of the requirement allow the use of food lockers instead of canisters if available so that people with a single destination with lockers wouldn't be required to carry a canister as long as they used a locker. Basically this would just disallow counterbalancing as a legal food storage technique.**

I. Permit System

a. Trailheads As mentioned earlier in this report, the High Sierra Trail had a large increase in use this season. It seemed to me that Mineral King may have had an increase also but I have not been able to get their totals yet. The bulk of travelers I contacted were either hiking the HST or doing the Kaweah Gap/Blackrock Pass loop from either Crescent Meadow or Mineral King.

b. Issuing Office The Lodgepole trailhead staff did a very good job this season, especially with the increased visitation. We started with 3 employees, lost one, but then replaced that position. This worked out well because the operation needs a minimum of 3 employees to function properly. The Mineral King operation really does NOT function well with only 2 employees. Again this year, one of the permit issuers never hiked the trails. The other trailhead ranger was only able to do day hikes because there weren't enough people to staff the MK Ranger Station. The adjacent backcountry areas did not get the attention they needed because of lack of staffing. The Cliff Creek drainage used to get frequent patrols by the MK staff and hasn't had much attention from them in the last few years. Also, the people who write the permits REALLY NEED to be familiar with the areas the permits cover. I hope that next year there will be 3 trailhead rangers and that they will be able to make multi-day patrols to learn the area and help maintain it.

J. Communications As most of the other backcountry rangers have probably already detailed, the radio system was problematic this year. At the beginning of the season the repeaters barely worked, the frontcountry base stations couldn't hear anybody, and we were all relaying for each other out there. The radio shop got the issues mostly rectified by July and the system was much better after that. We have all had maps of the park to identify radio problem areas and will be turning them in at the end of the season.

K. Needs for next year

Flathead screwdriver

Can opener

Scissors

Toilet seat for pit toilet riser (other seats aren't working)

New propane regulator with flex hose with ½" fittings

Metal spatula

Blackboard paint (for old peeling blackboard)

White spray paint

New climbing rope for SAR pack

Small summit registers

Scale to weigh gear
3 bottles of down soap for sleeping bag
toilet paper
sign “No Fires Beyond This Point”

L. Recommendations

a. Identify problems and present possible solutions. Include pictures, measurements or other supporting data

1. **LEAVE ALL FOOD STORAGE LOCKERS IN THE WILDERNESS**

2. **Hire 3 trailhead rangers for Mineral King and continue to hire 3 for all other trailhead areas.**

3. **Wilderness permits should be a per person charge. The per permit charge favors large groups and is unfair to smaller groups. As I showed last season, we would have made more money charging \$5 per person than \$15 per permit and it would have been much more equitable.**

4. **The park shuttle bus system is a great addition to the park but it doesn't serve backpackers very well. The permit desk is open at 7 am but the first shuttle bus doesn't arrive until 9 am so people get a very late start on the trail if they use the buses. Also, the buses don't stop at the Wolverton trailhead at all. It would be very easy to do so, maybe just on the hour instead of every few minutes. At the Crescent Meadow trailhead, the last bus leaves the parking lot at 5:30 pm. In the middle of summer, it is light until almost 9 pm and many hikers don't make it out by 5:30 so it doesn't serve them at all. How about one early bus that picks up backpackers at the VC in Lodgepole and stops at both Wolverton and Crescent Meadow; then hourly or so stops at Wolverton trailhead; and one bus that has a late run out to Crescent Mdw. just before dark?**

M Pertinent Inventory

There should be at least 4 and possibly 6 full propane tanks at the Bearpaw Ranger Station in 2009. There is some firewood on the front porch in case anyone uses the station during the off season. The solar panels are wedged into the beams over the front porch so that the batteries keep charging all winter and I have left the DC battery charger and base station there. Also, the remote mike for the handheld is there as are all the other items from previous inventories including full EMS pack, SAR gear, 4 bottles O2, 3 fire extinguishers, 4 new wooden chairs, sleeping bags and pads, pocket rocket and fuel.

2008 End of Season Report
Charlotte Lake RS
Durkee & Meier

Summary

Overall, a very quiet season without major incidents. A low snow year so hikers were in early. A large glut of PCT hikers (over 100) were through in the last two weeks of June. As always, they have a disproportionate impact (relative to their numbers) since they leave trash in bear boxes and build fires. They're mostly gone by the time we open our station. On July 14th, we had a pretty impressive rain storm. About 2" of rain in two hours or so caused major flash flooding, leaving a huge amount of pine needles and other flotsam over half of the lake. It was the same set of storms that caused flash flooding in Independence. I talked to a couple of geologists researching the Independence event and suggested that the surge was likely exacerbated by an initial hail storm, followed by rain which melted and washed down the hail in addition to the rain. Throughout the park, we seem to get one event like this every five years or so, though the frequency at any one place is over a much longer duration (likely something like a 30 year + event). I can think of two similar events at McClure; one at Crabtree; and one in the Enchanted Gorge (with a flood surge of over 10 feet through the gorge). Very cool stuff.

Radio communication was a major problem into early August. In a separate memo, I suggested that during periods of repeater failure, a person ought to be assigned relay duty on park ridge lookout. At the very least, a formal plan and response is critical to ensure safety of backcountry personnel.

Dave Yemm spent several days in early September to carry out repair projects on the Charlotte cabin and to survey for future repairs. At long last the propane line was redone in black pipe and with proper fittings. This was much easier than I thought it would be and the remaining stations (in Kings only LeConte – not sure about Sequoia) could be fairly easily done by the ranger. This continues to be a critical safety issue that needs to be finished.

Month	Visitors Contacted	Miles Hiked
June 24 th on	110	33
July	533	203
August	725	220
September	455	183
October (out 10/6)	55	35
TOTAL	1878	674

Incidents:

SARs: Amazingly, none. Assisted in one search by giving BOLF to trail crew who found the guy.

Medicals: 3 (one HAPE, self evacuated; 2 nausea & general malaise combined with testosterone poisoning. Tx with fluids and rest).

Citations: 2 (no permit)

Verbal Warnings: 135 (mostly tents on vegetation and washing in streams or lakes).

Fires: 2: One escaped campfire approx. 10' X 4' I put out; the other, likely started from burning toilet paper, burned extremely hot and spread rapidly across clumps of whitebark & Foxtail for several hundred feet. A fire crew of three responded after my initial size up and report.

Use Patterns

Overall, visitation seemed about average for hikers and possibly slightly below average for stock users. There were probably several hundred PCT hikers through in June. I saw about 150 of them and Dave Gordon estimated we missed another 150 who came through before we were on station. We really need to continue our efforts to make sure they're informed of minimum impact regulations for SEKI. There's a significant minority of PCT hikers who cause damage (improper food storage; leaving food or garbage in bear boxes & illegal fires) disproportionate to their actual numbers.

Stock

Brian Berner did almost all spot trips and dropped off food caches for clients. He and his packers did a good job and consistently took out the garbage left in the bear box. In addition, Rock Creek, John Berry, Reds Meadow and Cedar Grove had a couple of through trips. All did fine, following regulations. Charlotte Meadow itself (below the fence) probably only had 15 grazing nights. Use seemed down from previous years with no areas receiving excessive grazing or damage. Upper Vidette, closed for recovery the last several years, showed lush growth, excellent streambank and roll pit recovery from my last visits 3 and, especially, 10 years ago.

Natural Resources

Wildlife

Bear problems are almost non-existent. Who woulda thought?? Although one bear was seen in the Charlotte area a couple of times, it appears that they're all hanging out below Junction Meadow; one sighting in Gardiner (which has historically had a bear or two wandering through there); and none for Kearsarge Lakes or upper Bubbs. I saw very little scat anywhere above 9,000 feet and none had plastic or foil in it. There were no reported losses of hiker's food to bears nor any injuries. This is a direct result of the combination of over 95% compliance in canister use and the existence of bear boxes.

Other fun wildlife stuff:

- Three Bighorn rams on the Kearsarge high trail. I hadn't seem them at this spot in about 15 years, so probably a good sign that they're coming south of Gould again. Roxanne also saw several ewes in the Pinchot Pass area – this was an even more important sighting and might indicate these bands are once again expanding into habitat they haven't been in since the population crash of the mid-90s. The same is true for reports of the Langley herd, which may now have the most extensive population of all the Sierra bands.
- Two White Tailed rabbits (Townsend's Hare) hung out around the station much of the summer.
- I compared my own pika sightings from previous years (up to 15 years ago) to this year, and they appear to be in the same areas and numbers now as then, though most of these sightings are above 10,000 feet and not likely to be affected yet by climate change.

However, there did appear to be a healthy population in the rocks south of Vidette Meadow (about 9,200').

- Saw a single yellow-legged frog in a small stream on the (b) (3) (B). Where'd it come from?? I don't know of a breeding population closer than (b) (3) (B). It's possible that they're breeding at a small pond about 400 vertical above where I saw it, but I didn't get a chance to check it out this season. The ponds near (b) (3) (B) at 11,200 continue to do well: healthy population of both adults and tadpoles and no sign of Chytrid. These ponds are critical habitat and need to be more closely monitored. It doesn't appear that any of the frog/fish teams in the area get up there to do a census.
- This was another year where there didn't seem to be any Douglas Squirrels in the immediate vicinity of the station, though there were several nearby. I'm concerned this is because of past use of rat poison by the State Snow Survey in both their instrument shed and in the station. Douglas Squirrels had previously accessed the instrument shed to find nesting material and used the poison box for that purpose. No attempt has been made by the Survey to make the shed mouse or squirrel-proof. I've previously told Dave Harte this practice is illegal in a National Park, but am not sure he's listening. The Kern Ranger reports poison is still being placed in cabins there, though long experience shows that simply keeping the doors closed solves any mouse problems.
- This didn't make it into Dave Gordon's end of season report, but he just told me he saw no Belding ground squirrels anywhere in Evolution Valley. A once vigorous population is now completely gone from McClure meadow as well as Colby. The nearest populations are now up on the Darwin Bench and it's not likely that Evolution Valley we be repopulated. As I've mentioned before, we need a better way of tracking wildlife populations and responding to sudden habitat or populations losses like this. Their loss could have been a natural event, but we'll likely never know.

Cultural Resources

There's been no apparent disturbance of the several Native American sites in the area. The most important and extensive is the greater Bullfrog area. Fortunately, people pass right through this without recognizing camps or artifacts. The same is true at the Bullfrog/JMT junction and of several sites up Bubbs Creek beyond Center Creek. I did re-find and photograph some sort of artifact near Kearsarge Lakes. It's a rectangular piece of what looks like rhyolite (???). There's scattered obsidian about 100 feet below, but I'm not sure if it's a Native American or European artifact. I'll send the photos and UTM to Tom Burge.

Backcountry Facilities

As noted, the ranger station received some critical work by Dave Yemm after an initial survey by David Karplus. Dave made the solar more stable and efficient; installed black pipe, fittings and an inside gate valve for the propane; and some other small projects around the station. We discussed the need for complete reshingling of the roof; putting the solar panels on a pole NE of the station corner; a better screen door; screens for at least two of the windows; and a safer porch and steps. There's been a long standing need for critical safety and maintenance work at all backcountry stations. Rangers have done almost all of the work carried out over the last 30+ years and it's long past time for some professional work on these stations. Clearly funding needs to be provided by building maintenance for these and all station construction.

Trails

On July 14, a major rain event caused extensive damage to trails in the Kearsarge Pass/Bullfrog area. In addition, some more work needs to be done on the new sections of Kearsarge Pass.

Specifically:

- Retaining walls appear to be needed on a couple of the new Kearsarge switchbacks. The loose fist-sized rocks are continually rolling down and covering the tread.
 - It would also be a good idea to carry out some more rehab and naturalization of the old tread.
- The switchbacks between the Bullfrog Junction and Sand Flat had extensive gulleying and erosion after the rain storm. A number of steps are undercut and walls weakened. The damage is such that sections could give way with stock use.
- Parts of the Kearsarge high trail directly above Bullfrog had a fair amount of debris flood across the trail. I shoveled much of it out to make the trail stock passable, but a crew will need to spend a day or two there to repair undercut tread; shovel the trail out and repair a wall or two.

Camp Areas

Camps are staying in better shape than previous years, showing a continuing and increasing awareness of minimum impact camping techniques by hikers. This is a direct result of years of ranger contacts and the efforts of trailhead rangers. Garbage left in camps is significantly down from 10 and 15 years ago. This year I noticed a significant drop in illegal fire rings (with the possible exception of early-season PCT hikers). The only significant problem is continued use of bear boxes as trash & “extra” food dumps as well as their use for food caches for through hikers. We pull out at least 150 lbs of trash and “free” food from the area food storage boxes. I have no real solution to this problem other than continued education. All the boxes have large signs warning about leaving food or trash. Caches continue to be a problem and I have recommended that we place a sign at the beginning of the Kearsarge trail (on the USFS side) telling visitors they can’t leave them. The USFS is allowing the boxes at Onion Valley to be used for caches.

Both trailhead and backcountry rangers need to do a better job of increasing awareness for washing clothes – with or without soap – in lakes and streams. Most campers are aware they shouldn’t use soap, but many continue to rinse their clothes after a day’s hike directly in the stream. I tell them that if they don’t want to drink it, it shouldn’t go in their drinking water. Recent work by Dr. Robert Derlet suggests this, among other nutrients, could be a contributor to algal growth in lakes and some streams. This is especially extensive and visible at Charlotte and Rae Lakes (as well as Darwin and Evolution Lakes). Lakes without high human or stock use don’t show this algal growth. It seemed as if there was much more suspended algae (as noted both visually in the lake and from the frequent clogging of the station water filter through the rest of the summer). This could well have been caused by the increased nutrient availability following of the July rain.

Permits

No changes here. USFS did a much better job this year making sure that all NPS visitors had the SEKI minimum impact sheet. I did note one permit of a hiker starting in August from Tuolumne where the permit was issued by the PCTA. This could become a problem if more people discover this as a way to avoid quotas. In addition, of course, these hikers are not given relevant local

regulations. PCTA should be prohibited from issuing permits for trips originating in SEKI, YOSE or any contiguous USFS areas.

There was also the problem of at least two dogs where the owners had “Service Dog” cards for the dogs. With the person I contacted, it was clear the training involved did not meet the standards of what I understand to be a true Service Dog (e.g. Canine Companions or Guide Dogs for the blind – both of which have over a year of training and rigorous testing for a dog to pass). Although NPS is required to make “reasonable accommodation” for people with disabilities, I believe such accommodation does not require us to endanger wildlife and other hikers by allowing dogs clearly not trained such that they won’t chase wildlife; that they don’t have proof that they don’t carry diseases transmittable to wildlife; and that they won’t bite or endanger hikers or stock on trails. I recommend clearer regulations to this effect be put in the Compendium. In September, a hiker came in with a Guide Dog. The dog had a full harness and was clearly a guide dog for a visually impaired person, so there was no problem or question about a fully trained service dog and reasonable accommodation in this instance.

Communication

As noted in a separate memo, we need a formal, planned response to radio repeater failure in the backcountry. Backcountry rangers were able to implement a fairly good *ad hoc* response, but it depended on several rangers staying at their stations to be able to put together an effective relay. To a certain extent, issuing Satellite phones provides a backup, but they didn’t seem to work effectively when there was cloud cover or where there wasn’t a good horizon to get a signal. We seem pretty good at watching out for each other, but until the system is formalized, there will be a critical safety gap.

Photos

Photos of the rain event and flooding; trail damage; wildlife (Townsend Hare); Bullfrog Fire; and Upper Vidette meadow transect were placed in the Charlotte folder on the photo drive.

Recommendations

1. As I recommended in a separate memo, draw up a formal SOP in response to radio repeater failure in the backcountry. This should assign responsibilities to various personnel – both frontcountry and backcountry – and wilderness rangers to make sure that all backcountry personnel have the ability to communicate and that someone in the frontcountry is available to communicate with.
2. Put the station's two solar panels on an approximately 8 ft. pole near the NE corner of the cabin instead of on the roof. In addition to being more efficient, this would be a major safety improvement. The current set up requires the ranger to thrash around on the roof while awkwardly trying to attach the two panels. It is a fairly dangerous maneuver. A pole configuration would be much safer to set up. The pole could be hinged at the base, the panels attached while it's down, then raised and the base secured by a pin or something.
3. Apparently the snow survey removed their key to the instrument shed. It's important to have access in the spring and fall to put the survey food, wood and other equipment away for storage. There's obviously not room in the cabin to do so nor should it be an NPS responsibility to store survey food and equipment.
4. David Karplus designed a form for trail crew to record all injuries. I think this is a great way to get a truer picture of work-related injuries and to improve employee safety. Injuries are definitely underreported. This form allows everything to be recorded without worrying about the hassle of a CA-1 or, as important, dithering over whether an injury is serious enough to require one.
5. Food caches in bear boxes continue to be a problem. A number of people were told by USFS (Bishop) that it was OK to leave them. We ended up with about 8 of them, since the people had already come all the way in. In addition, we probably hauled away over 150 lbs of garbage out of the area's boxes. This is getting out of hand and, for the garbage, I don't know of an easy solution. All the boxes have signs against leaving garbage or "free food," but they're too often ignored. The boxes are definitely necessary, though I think we can get rid of two or three more (as noted in separate memo & map to Rachel: lower two Kearsarge Lakes; middle Bubbs creek).
6. The switchbacks between the Bullfrog junction and the sand flat are in really bad shape and need some serious work.

Sign Request:

1. Need a sign at the start of the Kearsarge Pass trail (just above Onion Valley on the existing NPS sign) that tells people they can't leave food caches in NPS bear boxes: "Food Caches are not allowed in National Park Service Bear Boxes. If left, they will be confiscated." Or something like that... It would be easiest to attach if a "U" bracket is used. That way it won't be necessary to drill new holes in the existing post.

Charlotte ranger station has no other equipment needs. Consumables (propane, paper towels, toilet paper etc.) were taken in in October, as well as new solar batteries.

2008 END OF SEASON REPORT HOCKETT RANGER STATION

A. SUMMARY

My season actually began on June 10th when VIP Don McDonald and I left Jerky trailhead to pack in the Kern Ranger's and Plant Crew supplies for the summer. We left at noon with 6 pack animals and overnighted at Trout Meadow. We noticed several helicopters flying in and out over the area until about 7 PM. The flights started again the next morning and continued until we arrived at the Kern at about 2pm. By 6 we had the water opened, the solar up, and the gas connected. We had brought in two 5-gallon tanks of propane and found I believe 3 large full ones and one empty at the station.

Don and I hiked to Henry Brown's camp across the river to see what the helicopters were hauling. We contacted the building contractor who reported that there were approximately 57 flights during the last two days. Lumber, concrete, and other construction materials for a 2-story cabin were brought in. He advised that the building permit issued by Tulare County restricted the size and location of the cabin site. The contractor was reminded that the flights were not to fly over the Kern Station or up canyon as we had observed. He said the owner informed him of that but he did not think the station was open yet. In any event he would ensure the flights remained over the river or east of it.

The next morning we discovered the P trap in the kitchen was cracked and leaked terribly. The crack was most probably the result of water that froze during the winter and burst the metal. Found one in the tool shed and made it work. Don and I packed up plant crew equipment for back haul and loaded nearly four mules with garbage and trash left from last season. We departed the station about noon on Thursday and again overnighted at Trout Meadow. Gregg Feltis met us at the trailhead at noon the next day and took tired horses and humans home.

After a week of EMT refresher at Beetle Rock and equipment issue and other administrative duties at Ash Mt. VIP Mac and I departed Atwell enroute Hockett on June 26. Several hundred fires were burning throughout the state at that time and the smoke was resting on the plateau it seemed. Had a small wreck at the first corner on the station side past the bluffs. My three mules went down the steep ravine. Nobody hurt and an hour and half later we were back on the trail.

Laura Pelewski had been to the Hockett R. S. during the week I was at the Kern. She reported that someone had broken into the cabin prior to her arrival.

She was able to repair the front door so it could be secured, and said that she was unable to determine if anything was taken or damaged inside. There had been a major rainstorm prior to her arrival and perhaps someone had used the cabin for shelter. She also reported that the solar system was not working and was unable to locate a multi meter to investigate the problem. She suspected the batteries were dead. Well as it so happens, VIP Mac owns an Alarm and Lighting business in Visalia and is an electrician. We (he) deduced that the batteries had been discharged completely during the winter. More on that in section E. (Facilities). The opening of the station was completed in no time with the help of Mac, who stayed for 10 days. We both came down with serious sinus infections/head colds that we attributed to the poor air quality. Despite that Don returned with me on July 10 to help with the install of the new batteries and solar equipment. I purchased an inexpensive multi meter and left it in the blue station information box.

My work schedule this summer was work ten days, and off for four. Thank you Erika.

B. VISITOR SERVICES

a. Contacts:

Backpackers 112

Stock Users 9 commercial trips, 66 head of stock, and 56 people
6 private trips, 24 head of stock, 27 people

b. Law Enforcement

There were no law enforcement incidents directly but several incidents bare mentioning.

On August 14th I heard Nick Knutson on the radio trying to raise dispatch or Mineral King Ranger Station. It was during an afternoon thunderstorm. I asked him if I could assist him. He was trying to report that there was several dogs traveling with some backpackers camped at Franklin Lakes. He was in the middle of the storm and wanted to turn off his radio for safety. I told him I would pass along the information. I contacted Mineral King R.S. the next morning. The following day I received a radio call that the offenders were located and citations issued.

On August 8th I found a group of 8 stock users, with 10 head of stock camped at South Fork Meadow. The meadow was closed to grazing this summer. Fortunately I ran into them on a hiking patrol of the South Fork the morning after their arrival. I asked for their permit and produced one issued by the USFS Springville office. It was issued for South Fork Meadow on the 6th of August. They explained that they had arrived at the meadow late last night, after entering the park over Summit Lake. They

were looking for Green Meadow and so took the Windy Gap trail but could not find it, traveled past the Blossom Lake trail and ended up at South Fork. I told them there were signs at Summit Lake, and Windy Gap that advised that South Fork Meadow was closed to grazing. They did not see them they said.

I observed resource damage to vegetation and root exposure as the result of tying to trees for the night. This was a very inexperienced group of stock users. They had used a section of clothesline for a highline strung between two trees on vegetation in a wet soil. The group leader (20 year old (b) (6) of Tipton Ca.) admitted the highline was broken within minutes of being put up and resulted in them having to tie up the stock to trees. I photographed the damage and instructed them as to how to cover the exposed roots with soil. They did not have a shovel or rake and I asked them to use their frying pan to scoop the soil up. They did.

After the group rehabbed the camp (this is the small camp south of Rock Camp at the south edge of the meadow) I gave them a copy of BCHC Gentle Use pocket guide for backcountry stock users, and took them to Slims Meadow. Because they were afraid their stock would wander off if they turned them out to graze, they could only hand graze. Slims meadow has several hitch rails and this would allow them to hand graze and then tie up to hitch rails for the night. I discussed with them the importance of having a shovel and rake when they traveled in the backcountry. Having to use their skillet as a shovel drove that subject home. Fortunately the Trail Crew had just vacated the camp, and I found a rake and shovel in their locked equipment box for the group to use.

It was also a good time to point out to this group of stock users the condition of the camp upon their arrival, and that the TC had just left after two weeks

The TC had cleaned out the fire pit, left some firewood, and removed nearly all signs of manure at the hitch rails. They had also done this at

their camp at Hockett and I made a point of thanking Billy and his crew for that effort. In any event I made certain that this private group took note of the condition of the camp and that I expected the camp would look just like it or better when they left.

I returned the next morning to check on their welfare. They said all went well. I explained that when they left I expected that the hitch rail areas and the camp in general would be free of manure and with very little sign that they had visited the camp. They left the next morning and I found the camp in good condition.

c. Citations

No citations were issued this season.

d. Search, Rescue, Medical incidents

There were no SAR's

e. Fatalities

There were no fatalities

f. Weather

Mostly fair weather in the early season, July and August saw several days each of excellent afternoon thunderstorms complete with hail and strong winds. A family of six, the youngest 8 years old were caught in one of the storms as they hiked back from Evelyn Lake to their camp at Hockett. At 630 pm the group had still not returned and I went out looking for them. I found the 8 year old and her 13 year old brother running down the trail about a half-mile from the station. They thought the rest of their family was behind them. I sent these two who were soaked and shivering to the station where I had a fire going. I asked Billy Hancock and his crew to ensure the two arrived. I continued up the trail and located the 10 year old and 16 year old. They said their parents were behind them, and a few minutes later I located them. On the way back to the station I came upon two other backpackers, both soaked and cold. The cabin was crowded that evening with everyone crowded around the stove, drying wet clothing and attempting to keep warm. The trail crew served up some pasta and sauce for everyone and by 9pm the rain had stopped. The family went to their respective tents and the two backpackers spent the night in the tack shed.

g. Fires

There were no fires on the Hockett Plateau. Smoke from fires in the Mariposa area and other areas produced a good deal of smoke at Hockett.

On August 23rd about 330pm Ash Mountain Fire called me and asked that I check on a report of smoke on the South Fork. I could not see any sign of smoke and I was informed that the complaint was from a pilot flying over the park. I hiked to the south fork and then a mile up the Hunter Creek trail to Blossom Lakes and saw no sign of smoke or fire. It was then I learned from Ash Mountain Fire that the report came from a commercial airlines flying at 30,000 feet, and probably saw smoke generated from the Kern fire.

C. USE PATTERNS

a. Backpackers

Hikers far outnumbered the amount of stock use this summer. Only about 1/3 of the hikers encountered did the loop over Farewell, onto the Hockett and out to Mineral King, or in the other direction. Most arrived at Hockett, spent a night or two, went to Blossom Lakes for a night then came back to Hockett on the way out.

Several hiking groups came up from South Fork campground, and all complained about the poison oak on the lower portion of the trail, and some complained about how much of a climb it is from the campground to the Hockett. (About 5,000 feet in roughly 10 miles)

Some hikers stayed at Hockett Lakes, but in the early part of the season the mosquitoes were terrible there. As far as that goes, the little pests had a late hatch and were bothersome everywhere well into August.

There was some use at Summit Lake by hikers, and surprisingly at the very beginning of the season there were only two fire rings found there. After their removal, I returned several times and even into late August no new rings were built.

b. Stock

Stock use was the lowest I have ever observed on the Hockett. South Fork meadow was closed to grazing for the summer and most use was at South Fork Pasture also called Upper Camp. With the exception of one group all the stock users remained at one camp and did day rides to various lakes. The one exception was (b) (6), a regular private stock user. He and his family rode in from Mineral King, stayed 3 nights at Hidden Camp, rode to the Little Kern, then over Coyote, down to the Kern, up to the Hot Springs and out over Franklin Pass.

Whenever I returned to the Hockett after my days off I always saw some sign of stock use, almost always at Upper South Fork. I really thought that because South Fork Meadow was closed, that there would be considerable impact to Upper and Hidden Camp. I was surprised at how little use occurred at Hidden. The grass was still tall when I checked it in mid

September, and impact in the camp area was negligible. Two groups that camped there hand grazed their stock (their preference) and this helped keep the meadow in good condition.



Hidden Camp Meadow
Looking north from across the
river

South Fork from the trail
looking south

There was no evidence of stock use at Green Meadow, but that meadow typically stays wet late and is loaded with mosquitoes until it dries out. I didn't open that meadow until July 20th. I patrolled thru there in mid-September and found evidence of backpacker use only. Cyclone meadow was not used by stock users nor was there evidence that Summit Lake was used by stock.

There was stock use at Slims Meadow while I was out for the Military Trip during Labor Day weekend.

Because of the closure at Rock Camp, I posted signs at Touhy, Summit Lake, Windy Gap, South Fork Crossing, and at the junction of the Cyclone meadow trail and South Fork Trail. The signs advised of the closure at Rock Camp, and suggested stock users to use Hidden Camp, Upper, Slims, Green, and Hockett for camping. The signs also gave general locations of the camps.



Only one group of stock users passed through the plateau on a cross-country trip. (b) (6) of Three Rivers passed the station on his way from Mineral King. I have run into (b) (6) all over the park and in the Little Kern, during the last few years. He and his wife and two children were going to camp at Hidden for a few nights then ride over to the Kern, via Wet Meadow and Coyote Pass. I have learned that he made the trip in its entirety without incident. Before he left the Hockett though he returned to the Station and left me a note that he came by to visit, and that he was on his way to the Kern. He said that Hidden was full and so he had to stay at South Fork, and that his animals loved the meadow. At first I was shocked, but then realized he was probably pulling my leg. In any event I hiked over to the South Fork just to ease my mind and that is when I found the party of eight camped at the south camp.

Mr. (b) (6) of Springville was camped at Rock Camp with his wife and 2 granddaughters, and confirmed that the 8 riders had come in late last night. He also confirmed that he had been spotted at Rock Camp by Tim Shew 3 day's prior, and that he too knew (b) (6), and that (b) (6) had been camped at Hidden, before leaving for the Kern, not at South Fork. Phew! What a kidder that (b) (6) is.

c. Administrative

Administrative use on the plateau was limited to the Trail Crew and myself. The trail crew was at Hockett, arriving on the 2nd of July. Nick Knutson was the crew's packer and he used a hot wire to try and restrain the stock. The fence was put up in the meadow south of the pasture.

Sometimes the stock respected it sometimes not. When they didn't the stock were usually in the meadow areas of the ridge west of the station. When Nick left for a resupply trip the TC used an electric fence to keep their work stock in the meadow. Doing so allowed the crew to have their stock available to them each morning. It was not easy to track the number of animals that were left behind when he went out, but most of the trips out involved his saddle horse and 6 mules. That normally left 3 saddle horses and 2 mules for the trail crew. The crew moved to Slims in the 3rd week of July. There they used the electric fence again, to restrain the horses and a few mules, excluding the remainder of the stock, which kept them close to the restrained herd. The grass in this meadow is a little different; it is short by nature. I checked the meadow a week or so before the TC moved there. It is a short tufty kind of grass, not like the tall grasses of say Hockett meadow or Hidden Camp. It was a deep green and very thick. I had gone to the camp on my way to Quinn. I found the meadow to be as stated above, and not too wet as it was roughly the 23rd of July. A few days after the crew left the camp to move to Lost Canyon, I had occasion to take a group of stock users to Slims to camp. The meadow was in fair condition with some hoof damage to the edges of the stream in one area at the top of the meadow. The group I took there to camp was only hand grazing for two nights so I thought that their impact would be minimal. There was evidence of use at Slims while I was away on days off or the military trip, but only indicated by the fire ring. The hitch rail areas seemed to free of manure and the camp was in fair shape, the fire ring needing attention.

My grazing was limited to Hockett Meadow. As said before I was on 10 days on and 4 off schedule. When I rode out on my days off I left my stock at Atwell. I had 3 nights of grazing at the Quinn Cabin, and 15 nights in the Hockett pasture.

d. Commercial

Balch Park Pack Station is the only commercial user on the Hockett Plateau. This year the owner Tim Shew, was helped by his son and daughter, both 16 years old. Towards the end of the season he utilized Mike Brown and Mark Brown. Mike has packed for Tim for 10 or 15 years on a limited basis. Mark has packed for Golden Trout and I believe only helped Mike Brown on one full service trip to Upper Camp this summer.

Tim Shew was at Upper Camp before I arrived on the 26th of June. He had just left with a party and returned to Upper Camp with another group a week later. He had a total of 9 trips that I observed. I believe he may have had 2 other spot trips to South Fork crossing and to Rock Camp that I did not see but had heard about. These occurred toward the end of the season.

He and I had some discussions about the low number of private stock groups to the Hockett. He suggested that the closure of the South Fork might have deterred some people who didn't want to arrive on the plateau and be unable to find a place to camp. I suggested that the economy and fuel costs might have some impact on use. He said that there was no doubt that the economy hurt his business with fewer bookings at the onset of the season, and then the cancellation of trips that he was hoping for. He did say that he had a good hunting season schedule. I confirmed this before I returned to the Hockett after the military trip by going to dispatch and examining the weapons permits for hunters traveling through the park issued by Kip. I counted no less than 6 people who were traveling to Soda Creek or Wet Meadow via Windy, all being packed in by Balch Park. He also had some bow hunter trips earlier in the month.

Tim did share with me that the fewer private groups helped him in that he didn't have to compete for the stock camps on the South Fork. He did say that when he saw stock groups at the trailhead he would have friends inquire of the group's itinerary and if they were going to Hockett he made sure that they knew Rock Camp was closed. Sometimes the group would then change their itinerary. If they didn't I am sure that Tim or his packer would have pulled out of the pack station before daylight the next day with some pack mules and the rest of the party would follow later at a more reasonable time.

All of his full service trips were at Upper camp. His spot trips were to Hidden, South Fork Crossing, and Rock Camp.

D. NATURAL RESOURCES

a. Bear Activity

Bears were seen regularly on the Hockett. A momma bear, black in color with a cub was a regular in the meadow on the other side of Wittman Creek below the Evelyn Lake junction. I saw a large bear brown in color on several occasions in the Hockett Lakes area,

A very persistent black bear was observed above the trail at Corner Creek. The stock would not move forward or backward, and the bear would not move from his comfortable spot on the side of the hill. No amount of spurring or pulling would move my horse. I had to get off and throw rocks at the bear for a few minutes before he wandered up the slope and out of sight.

At Upper camp I found that a bear had attempted to get into the food locker. Tim Shew had a group there and they were out for the day. All food and scented items were in the locker. The bear knocked a few pots and pans that were stored on top of the locker around, and his claw marks

were seen in the dirt as he attempted to push the locker around. A nearby tent was not bothered, and nothing damaged.

It seems that every season a bear does manage to visit my station. I leave absolutely nothing out near or in the shower/toilet area and the bear does nothing to the structure itself. It simply loves to destroy the shower curtain on the shower side of the structure. It just rakes its claws and shreds the thing. In years past I have left the curtain in a closed position protecting the stall from windblown debris. The bear shreds it. For the last two seasons I open the curtain and tie it back so it is not as inviting. Forget that. It was shredded. I used duct tape to cover the big gaps and rips to help block the wind while showering during my last few weeks there.

b. Wildlife

Deer were plentiful at the first of the season. The Hockett Meadow herd numbered close to 35 then. As the season progressed the numbers dropped until September when there were evenings when there were absolutely no deer to be seen.

The above-described herd consisted of about 9 very large bucks. They always seemed to enter the herd from different locations. The does and fawns came in from the west edge of the meadow and the north edge. The bucks entered from the east edge and south end.

Mountain lion tracks were often seen on the trail from Clover Creek to the station. I also would encounter lion tracks on the trail near Sand Meadow.

The marmots left a little earlier than usual. They are often around the station when I close it up, but this year they were all gone by the 12th of September. Does that mean anything, like an early winter with lots of rain?

Red Tail hawks were abundant around the Hockett meadow and over the Hockett Lakes area too.

c. Vegetation

All the meadows were moderately wet at the beginning of the season and were drying by the end of June. A little bit of rain in early July gave the meadows a little recharge. The result of that rain and a rain in August helped to give the wildflowers a shot of growth and color lasting until late August. Several visitors commented on the myriad of colors and number of flowers along the trail edges.

E. CULTURAL RESOURCES

a. Prehistoric Sites

I examined the grinding holes at the site (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B). Also looked at the grinding site near Hidden Springs. Is the old cabin site there historic? There is also (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) trail junction. (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B).

Interestingly enough I had occasion to speak with Cherie Bartlett in the Wilderness office after she had visited the Hockett Ranger Station. She believed that a (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B). When I checked several days later, I examined (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) and while I am no expert, they certainly could be, and if they are they should remain unheralded. Seven years in and around the Hockett and still learning. Things that make you go “hummmm”

b. Historic Sites

The remains of the old ranger station near the Hockett Trail Crew Camp continue to rest quietly. The Quinn cabin is still sound and got a close examination by Thor this fall.

F. BACKCOUNTRY FACILITIES

a. Ranger Station

The station is in good condition. When I closed up the station for the season, Thor and his crew were putting a new roof on it. The west half was completed when I left. The old shakes will be stacked up behind the tack shed and will provide all the kindling rangers and staff will need for several seasons. Firewood for the snow survey crew

The backslash behind the sink continues to rot and become worse with each passing season. The cabinets are becoming out of alignment due to the settling or movement of the east wall. The cabinet doors above the countertop are no longer square and are tricky to engage the locking latch hardware.

On the subject of hardware I had to replace the hasp on the front door due to the forced entry earlier in the season. The gate latch type device I installed will hopefully be a bit stronger and by utilizing carriage bolts, more difficult to remove the latch itself. The throw of the latch reaches into the doorframe about 11/2 inches.

My best guess regarding the break in is that it was accomplished with the use of a pry bar that had been stored for years up on the post and beams

where the shovels are stored above the cabin porch. I can only imagine that the pry bar was used by survey crew members to perhaps pry the nails that were used to secure the shutters. For the last 6 years the front door shutter has been secured using gate latches and locks. These too were pried off with the pry bar. Therefore until someone can explain the need for the pry bar with the shovels, I have removed it and placed it in the tack shed. I painted the screen door and doorframe. The paint that is available in the tack shed is really a stain for the exterior timbers. It is very runny and you will need to bring in a drop cloth to keep the stain off the front porch and vegetation . Check with Thor, he may have left a large drop cloth in the attic of the tack shed. The stain needs vigorous agitation and if you can accomplish that, there is a weed sprayer that can better facilitate the application of the stain.

Solar system- The batteries were dead when we arrived. It was necessary to connect the solar panel directly to a battery to bring up the charge so that we could get some power to recharge a radio battery. The old batteries were not marked as to what year they were installed, but we took them out and brought in 3 new ones, and we put tape on them with the year 2008. The new style controller was a little difficult to get to work. The batteries would only charge to a rate of 12.8 volts. We put the old style controller that we thought was kaput, back on line and presto, the batteries were charging to a rate of 14 plus volts. We rewired the bird nest that was the electrical wires. We installed a 12 cigarette lighter plug that enables users to recharge cell phones, ipods, and etc. It is located between the inverter and controller. I brought in a multi meter and it is in the blue station information box in the bookcase. The solar system schematic is also in that box. The solar panel was placed in the closet.

The inverter works well and the 12 volt radio battery and base station are new. The antenna is connected to the old hairpin style antenna mounted on the roof peak of the cabin. The cable runs from above the bookcase along the west dining room wall, through the door way and to the station. It works. I tried and so did District Ranger Dan Pontbriand to make the sputnik style antenna work with negative results. You can try if you like, it is located in the ranger's closet, and the post to mount it on is in the tack shed

This year I removed the propane pig tail (the little copper tubing normally attached to the gas regulator} and placed it in the ranger's bedroom closet. It is fragile and probably more so as it sits for several months in snow. A replacement pigtail should be brought in next season to be used as a backup.

The water pump worked very well this summer, holding its prime all season. The water is tasting a little more pipey as each season passes, but

it sure is cool and refreshing. As usual the water in the well was high at the beginning of the season and only about a foot of water was standing at the end of the season. The p trap is disconnected, and hopefully visitors will remember to empty the blue bucket after using the sink.

Don McDonald and I dragged out almost everything on the floor of the tack shed and swept out the old place. We put about 200 pounds of trash in a large tub. Everything in the tub is junk or trash and should be backhauled with the exception of the tub. The shed looked pretty good when we left.

Thor and I swept the chimney out, and it should be good for another 500 fires. Firewood for the snow folks was split and stacked. The refrigerator and stove worked well all season.

Quinn Station remains in good health. There were 3 cubes of water from the Hockett when I left there. Firewood and kindling was stacked. Cabin supplies, towels, flatware, pots and pans, coffee pot etc are sufficient. The food cache is down, and there are about 7 disposable propane bottles. The propane stove works well as do the lanterns.

While on that subject there is only 1/2 can of white gas at the Hockett R.S. and only two small bottles of propane. There is no gas lantern only two propane lanterns. **DO NOT USE THE GAS LANTERN IN THE TACK SHED!** It leaks. Because there is no propane, the antique gas stove is now being used, and it is on top of the fridge. Back to the Quinn. The mattresses are in desperate need of replacement. If the mattresses at the Hockett are ever replaced the old ones should be sent to the Quinn.

b. Signs

A new sign is needed at the crest of the Summit Lake trail where it meets the Windy Gap trail. An attached photograph is attached that depicts what the signs should say. One sign should say "South Fork 3 mi and an arrow to the right. The next line should read "Summit Lake .01 mile" with an arrow to the left. The sign below that should read Windy Gap 2.4 MI and an arrow to the right. I did route a drawing of what it was to say to Erika but just in case the photo should help.



At the junction of the Hockett Lakes trail and the South fork trail one sign is missing. The one directing visitors to Hockett R.S. in one direction and Hockett Lakes in the other is still there. But the sign that directs visitors east to the South Fork is missing. It may have stated something else beside South Fork, but I cant find a record of it.

G. TRAILS

a. Trail Activities

Most of my trail activities involved rocking trails, and obscuring or blocking parallel trails. I did use a handsaw a time or two for smaller trees that were blown down across the trail during the season. The trail crew rebuilt two short bridges just west of the station on the trail to Evelyn Lake. The trail crew took out a rather nasty group of large down trees on the Hunter Creek trail just above the South fork trail.

Problem areas are few but one that I feel needs attention is the portion of the trail that climbs up out of the South Fork Meadow. Just as you leave the meadow and the iron springs location and enter the tree line the trail becomes extremely wet, particularly in the spring. The trough is 18 inches deep and getting deeper. It is also getting wider as stock want to ride up on the upper edges of the trail and that attempt results in the shearing of the walls. Even when the season turns to fall this portion of trail about 50 to 75 long is still damp. In the spring it is a bog. I suspect that the source of water has something to do with the iron spring on the north side of the trail and up in the rocks just west of the tree line. It is just hard to guess the source of the moisture. On the other hand the trail between the Touhy Cut off and South Fork Crossing has been a problem area for over 20 years. The trail from the cut off south crosses Touhy Creek, and South Fork several times. The last one which puts the rider on the west side of Touhy just about to cross the South Fork and arrive at the stock camp on the east side is deep and boggy until about the first of September. I have no idea as to a solution, as it has been this way for a long time and probably for a

reason. I recall about 5 years ago, Tim Shew's oldest daughter was leading a spot trip to South Fork Xing in late spring and her horse went down in the bog on the west side of the creek. Both were ok, but Tim was pretty vocal about something needing to be done there. I am not sure how much this portion of the trail is used by folks though. Anyone riding from South Fork Campground is probably headed for South Fork or Hockett, and would cross the river at the crossing. Anyone coming over Touhy Gap is probably headed for the south fork and would take the cut off trail. So I

suppose the majority of use is restricted to the pack station taking spot trips to the crossing, the trail crew when they clear the trails in the spring, and the old Ranger on patrol.

H. CAMP AREAS

a. Conditions

Camp areas held up pretty well this season. The backpacker's camp at Hockett had a lot of use as did Upper Camp on the South Fork. I had to clean out the fire ring at Upper Camp twice this season. The soil in the immediate area was pretty compacted, but not extreme. What was terribly depressing was the cutting of trees that occurred while on my days off and on the military trip. Most of the wood cut was about 5 or 6 inches in diameter and appeared to be cut from small trees around the camp area. I can only imagine that it was done as a clearing of obstructions as opposed to cutting it for firewood. The cut timber was stacked in camp in its full-untrimmed lengths. I photographed the stumps where I believed the branches to have been cut from. A hand saw may have been used because if someone had a chainsaw they would have cut it to firewood length and carried the pieces to the wood stack. Instead the branches were cut in 15 to 20 foot length and dragged to the woodpile.



There is simply no need for this. There are cords of down and dead wood available in the immediate area. Heck, it's available all over the plateau. Where it gets pretty scarce are up at Blossom and Summit Lakes and both those are posted no fire areas. Firewood availability is minimal at Evelyn Lake too, but all the stock camps have easy access to firewood.

Hitch rails at the stock camps needed a lot of attention this spring. The trail crew repaired 7. One still needs work at Quinn but at the end of the season all the hitch rails on the plateau were still up.

b. Sanitation

The only camp where I began to see signs of TP Roses was in Upper Camp. I know that Tim Shew dug latrines for his guests, and so I am not sure how these roses came to be. The other camps on the South Fork all seemed to be free of obvious sanitation issues.

The pit toilet at the backpacker's camp at Hockett is another matter. For 2 seasons now one of the two toilets has been disabled due to a bent stainless steel cone, and a missing toilet seat. A new cone sits under the dock at Atwell, and well-intended efforts to get it into the station just never rose to the forefront as a priority. The other toilet was working wasn't it? All it took was a visit from the district ranger and a note from him resulted in a radar blip on my screen. After the military trip I had a day at the station and visited the site and said the heck with it. I donned rubber gloves, mixed up a gallon of bleach and retrieved the cone, and the seat from the pit, dragged it to the station and went to work. It aint pretty, but it is now functional, and pictures are included. The seat and lid do need to be replaced but the bailing wire I have installed will work for now.



And while we are on that subject, next season may be time to relocate the executive washroom at the station. The pit usually fill with water during the winter and spring and that sometimes helps to break stuff down, so the thing may last another season, but keep your eye on it.

c. Fire rings

Not too bad of a problem this year. The usual removal of foil along with the removal of coals. Only one volcano, and that was at Cyclone Meadow. Interestingly enough only two fire rings were found at Summit Lake this summer, and we took those out. On the west shore of the lower Hockett Lake I was able to rehab a large flat fire ring and reduce it to a 3 rock design.

d. Firewood availability

As mentioned in camping areas, lodge pole firewood is readily available at all campsites. With the exception of the fire ban at Blossom and Summit Lakes, fires are permitted on the plateau including Evelyn Lake

e. Food Storage

Based on contacts of hikers at Hockett Meadow, at least 1/2 of them carried canisters. Only one stock user had bear proof panniers. All the stock users utilized the park furnished food lockers at the campsites. I was able to repair the box at Hidden Camp and the one at the stock camp at Hockett Meadow. I used steel hinges I picked up at the warehouse and installed them with bolts and jam nuts. The first box we placed the hinges on the inside (to hide them) but the installation and alignment were really difficult. The next box we put the hinges on the outside and the job was a bit easier. Photos are attached.

There are a total of 6 lockers at the various campsites, and if you include the metal Knack (?) box at Slims there are 7.



I. PERMIT SYSTEM

a. Trailheads

There were no issues or problems with the MK Ranger Station this season. Several of the visitors complained of the inability to obtain a permit early in the morning before 8 or after 430 in the evenings. I often heard Lodgepole trail head contacting either the Pear Lake or Bearpaw ranger to advise them of special or problematic visitors or numbers of groups etc. It would have been nice to be alerted that a stock group was traveling to the Hockett from MK, or that a large group of hikers was planning a 3 or 4

day visit. Not always necessary to do but it would help the ranger prepare information for the visitor and suggest campsites or locations that would make their visit more enjoyable.

b. Issuing Office

When I reported to the Wilderness Office that a stock user was in possession of a permit issued for South Fork Meadow (closed to grazing) and was obtained from the USFS Springville Office, they were not surprised. They informed me that closures affecting the Kern were not being passed on to people obtaining permits for that area as well.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Digital Radio Coverage

The beginning of the season was the worst with the new radio system. Not until I was able to get an over the radio step by step from Rick Sanger and used group 1, 2, or 3 did it improve. For the most part coverage was the same as with analog, and in some cases a bit better. (b) (7)(F)

once at the cabin area and on occasion I can check out of service from the dining room table in the cabin or just outside the back door. If you switch to direct Nina at Bearpaw can relay your message for you.

There is no radio service in (b) (7)(F). Once you come out onto either the South Fork (below) or Blossom Lake trail (above) you can transmit.

K. NEEDS FOR NEXT YEAR

a. It would be nice to have an extra BP cuff and stethoscope at the station. I mentioned that to Erika and she was going to see if she could obtain one.

Dan Pontbriand took measurements for new window shades for the cabin.

The cabin needs caulking and paint. Thor was trying to get the foam tubing to work while on site with the roof repair. I don't know if time permitted for all that he would have liked to do. Someone should visit with him at Ash next spring and see what he thinks a ranger can do to facilitate the caulking and staining of the cabin. The materials used are not the white caulking or "chinking" stuff found at the Kern Station, so he would have to advise you on what and how.

The pasture fence is need of major repairs. New wire is needed and either wood fence posts or t-posts would help in the putting up of the fence in the spring.

The administrative outhouse should be evaluated in the spring for relocation.

Dan also suggested that the Bulletin board outside of the station should have a diagram of what is where in the immediate area such as food storage location, campsites, sanitation etc. I did draw one up but didn't have enough lamination material to cover it. Perhaps next year someone with a little more artistic ability can redo it and laminate it. I drew one up for the cabin as well that points out where the admin outhouse is located and the trail crew camp etc. Keep that one inside the station.

L. RECOMMENDATIONS

If South Fork meadow remains closed to grazing next year we should do more to sign the closure both along the trail near the jumping off points in the Forest Service side and at the park entrance areas. Perhaps Sylvia could submit a short column to the newsletters of the Sequoia and High Sierra Units of the BCHC in the spring, explaining the closure, etc.

M. PERTINENT INVENTORY

The cabin is stocked with good deal of cleaning supplies, a gallon of bleach along with other household cleaners. There are possibly 4 packages of sponges and scouring pads. There is no steel wool or wire scrubs.

I brought in some coffee cups so there are about 10 total. One or two cereal/salad bowls would help compliment what is now there. Plenty of plates, but the flat ware collection is skimpy. A few steak knives would help, along with 4 each of spoons, forks, and table knives. I used my own kitchen set and that is why I never paid too much attention to what was on hand for the station.

There are plenty of ladles, tongs, and other kitchen utensils in the drawers and a good selection of pots and pans. There are cookie sheets and cast iron skillet in the oven. I left a white plastic breadbox in the closet. Use it to store tortillas, bread and other things you need frequently but want to keep the critters away from. On that subject, mice were not a big problem this season, very nice.

The tablecloth is in the pine box along with 7 paper towels, and 8 toilet paper rolls. There are burlap bags in the pine box, and plastic bags of several sizes in the metal box marked newspapers on the floor of the west wall. The other half of the pine box contains 5 sleeping bags, blankets, pillows and a bag containing freshly laundered pillowcases.

The drawer to the right of the sink has a myriad of hand tools, tape measure etc. In the bookcase are two plastic cases, one contains a nice

screwdriver set, and the other a large socket set. A wrench set say from 7/16 to 3/4 inch would be helpful. The above-mentioned drawer has two large and two small crescent wrenches along with a pipe wrench. There are other pipe wrenches in the tack shed. You will do yourself and others a favor if you use only the crescent wrench to put the brass and copper propane pigtail back on the regulator come spring time. The pipe wrench tends to round the corners and makes future removals and installations more difficult.

In a drawer below the hand pump is a small cardboard box that contains replacement leather flappers for the water pump. The pump is set to go simply by reseating the pump to the base and tightening the bolts. The flapper is lubricated and ready to go. The pump is loosened at the end of the season to drain the water from it, and to keep folks from attempting to work the handle just to see if there is water available. On that subject the foot valve for the well, is located in the tack shed, on the south wall above the saddle racks. It is a 4-foot long of white plastic tube, with a spring on one end and a coupler on the other. When you install it don't cross thread the threads and when you think it is snug, give it another half turn. Doing so helps to maintain the pump prime.

There are three small 5 gallon and one large partial full propane tank in the shed.

There was never a U.S Flag in the cabin. I always brought in a new one each season and marked it with the year it flew at the Hockett and took them home. The flagpole is laid along the foundation of the west cabin wall. If you are so inclined and have a flag, just uncover the hole at the southwest corner of the cabin, and put the pole in it, attaching it to the rafters with a few nails and the attached plumbers tape. Thor was going to try and find a replacement pole before he left. If he did he was going to place it in the small trees behind the station near the outhouse. The cabin just looked more handsome with the flag flying.

I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to serve as the Hockett Ranger this summer, it was a terrific season, and made even more special with the work schedule I was given. The Military trip is always a highlight of my season and I appreciate the invitation to help in any way I can. We will miss the camaraderie of J.D.s presence next year. Have a great retirement!

Again thanks to all of you who read this for your continued dedication and contribution to the success of these parks, and permitting me to be a small part of that effort

.Joe Ventura

Hockett Ranger
2008

A. General Summary

The Kern Canyon 2008: Lots of weeds, visitors, yellow jackets but fewer rattlesnakes, less smoke and not as hot.

B. Visitor Services

a. Contacts

i. **Backpackers** =825 (includes patrols on HST)

ii. **Day hikers** = 25 (mostly "heli-hikers" from private land and anglers camped at Kern Lakes.

iii. **Stock** = 56 (private & commercial only; didn't include trail crews)

b. Law Enforcement (N/A)

c. Citations

Abandoned gear: One group abandoned their whole backpack and contents at the Hot Springs and then continued to "shed weight" throughout their trip (despite being told not to). Investigation for citation in progress. Commercial use violation from Golden Trout Pack Station resulted in citation to court.

d. Search, Rescue, Medical incidents

<u>date</u>	<u>location</u>	<u>type</u>	<u>Evacuation</u>
7/12	Kern Hot Springs	post-flu/fatigue	stock
8/28	Kern Ranger Station	chest pain/nausea/dizziness	helicopter
9/10	Wallace Creek	SOB (poss. altitude)	helicopter
9/11	Crabtree Rgr. Stat.	chest pain/SOB	helicopter

e. Fatalities

f. Weather

The weather was seemingly more temperate and wet in the Kern. Even though it was the second consecutive year of only 50% snowpack, virtually all mapped water sources ran and only shallow tarns dried up. Coyote's spring-fed creek provided water to the cabin all season with practically zero maintenance. On July 15th, a huge rain event (up to 3+\"/hr. in parts of the southern Sierra) caused flash flooding in recent post burn areas. Grasshopper Flat just south of the park had up to 3' of talus, gravel, and sand deposited onto the trail and whole water courses permanently diverted. High water marks reveal that over 3' of water ran through the area. I can now more easily envision how Kern Lake was formed in recent history!

g. Fires

The Kern Fire was the result of a lightning strike on August 15th . (I remember because I was racing home to the psychological comforts of the cabin, making it with five minutes to spare). It continues to burn as I type. Due to its location and prevailing winds, it didn't cause too much smoke in the canyon. It's a perfect location of moderately dense forest in an area that needs to burn yet doesn't threaten any structures or trails. And, it makes a nice buffer along our boundary. One comment with regards to Ash Mtn. Fire dispatch, it would be nice to get weekly updates and or confirmations on our smoke reports and/or local fires since the visitors are always inquiring. Plus, the rangers are just plain curious when they are a mere four miles from their station!

C. Use Patterns

a. Backpackers

I was stunned at the amount of visitation in the Kern this year. Lots of backpackers. I thought to myself, why on earth are you down here when you could be up there (the alpine)? Ahh. The fly-fishing. Apparently, *Fly Fishing* magazine had a write-up of the Kern this winter. Just when the bugs and heat would start to get to me, they would remind me of how lucky I was to be there.

b. Stock

Use among private users was also quite popular. At least four groups came through. Unfortunately, one private group of three men/six head of stock who had a week long trip planned in the park had to be turned back to the south. They had a permit but weren't told of the new grazing restrictions. It was a shame the USNFS office out of Springville dropped the ball as the visitors had made the effort to get the permit. In the future we could possibly accomodate them for a night at Little Pasture or Snake camp and then turn them back, although it's almost just as easy to send them back to Kern Lakes. We don't want to divert them to the private land that is velvet grass free, however.

c. Administrative

There was a lot of administrative use in the Kern this season. The trail crew's stay at the cabin was abbreviated. The weed crew extended their tour graciously to three weeks. Meadow monitor Frenzel spent almost one week with me working on RB plots and surveying for velvet grass south of the park. Two researchers for NASA went through the canyon also surveying plots for invasive weeds. McGinnis and crew visited a post-burn plot across the river from the station. The USFS had researchers check a demography plot just north of the station.

d. Commercial

Use was low as Golden Trout Pack Station didn't renew their permit until late season. Cottonwood Pack Station had two known trips into the Kern. As usual, the latter, did an excellent job. Golden Trout has citations pending for operating without a commercial license and leaving their camp a mess on one of their trips (see report).



Grain left & root damage from stock group along Kern river.

I would highly encourage the park to have a deadline for issuing these permits for backcountry use prior to our field season as it makes it very difficult for us to build up a rapport with these users when we "kick them out" one day and welcome them the next. It is not an appropriate position for us field personnel (packers included) to be in.

D. Natural Resources

a. Bear Activity

Bears seemed to frequent the Rattlesnake drainage and Lower Funston Meadow, hopefully due to natural forage. My closest encounter was with a sow and two cubs in the upper Kern where I accidentally spooked them and nearly caused the little ones to drown in the high river. Mama bear took a giant leap across a stretch of whitewater but the cubs whined and wisely refused to follow. I quickly made myself scarce. To my relief, they all reunited on the safe side of the river.

b. Wildlife

In addition to the frequent sign of bear, I saw mountain lion tracks (including a cub lion) almost on a daily basis in July along the canyon floor. Common mergansers were such late season. Bald Eagle were seen from Rattlesnake south throughout the summer. I observed one Northern Goshawk at close range for approximately five minutes just north of the ranger station. Rattlesnakes were somewhat scarce late season. But, yellow jackets and nests were just about everywhere you stepped! I'd prefer the former.

c. Vegetation

Vegetation held up rather well despite two years of drought although meadows such as Upper Funston appeared much less productive. In other words, despite little grazing, it looked like a normal year with lots of grazing. Lower Rattlesnake saw lots of administrative use (three weeks, Kern Trail Crew). This spring-fed meadow is actually best used in dry years like these. As Frenzel mentioned, it would be a good idea to try to rotate administrative use based on snowpack. Wet years, graze middle. Dry years, lower. Lower is very productive, but due to its steepness and springs, is very sensitive to physical impacts. 21" camp was used at least twice this season. It's a nice alternative to Lower Funston, provided the groups are not coming from the south. Otherwise, all meadows, got a break (aside from my weed tiller!) as a result of being closed and the ranger not having stock, one silver lining of the velvet grass invasion.

I collected four potential herbarium specimens this season, two (*Pericome caudata* and *Trichostema austromontana*) were from the Lower Big Arroyo Canyon, normally difficult to access in normal or high water years.



Pericome caudata

Lastly, velvet grass (*Holcus lanatus*) continued to rear its ugly head. Up to twenty new infestations of it and two of bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) were found in the park. I'm sure this number will continue to increase for a few years then ultimately decline with more focus placed on control measures in the Kern. The work of the weed crew (Leader Chacon, Degenstein, Cann) was invaluable. I and the canyon appreciate them extending their tours. In summary, all infestations seem controllable with the exception of Little Pasture and Snake Camp. I hope the park continues to fund and support Theil and Demetry's efforts as this is one of the biggest threats to the backcountry and the only time to act is now. It will not be controllable if left untreated as the USNFS lands already prove.

E. Cultural Resources

a. Prehistoric Sites

b. Historic Sites

All were visited and appear unchanged since 2007.

F. Backcountry Facilities

a. Ranger Station

The outside of the cabin is in good shape. The inside desperately needs chinking. Yemm and I stuffed steel wool and nailed wood in many of these gaping cracks. Yemm also made/replaced the screen doors and a few screen windows early season. Very classy job. Every one loves the leather door handle. The interior floor needs to be repainted. Miraculously, no pack rats or mice this season. At the time of this report, I am almost done cleaning up the feces and damage of last year.



Almost. I am very curious if the rodent decline was due to snakes and/or disease. Whatever the cause, it made for pleasant living conditions. Perhaps, a first in Kern history!

The tack/tool sheds need painted. Solar batteries may need replaced next year. The inverter still works albeit loudly. The base station is now unable to hit the repeater and functions as a charger only.

b. Signs

G. Trails

a. Trail Activities

Chacon and I removed a tree just south of the station that was causing all stock parties to bypass the station. Not in the best interest for velvet grass management.

Frenzel and I removed a tree just north of the station.

I filled in an ankle breaker (3' deep) hole that formed in the talus trail just north of the station.

b. Problem Areas (prioritized)

The Kern trail crew did a great job maintaining the trails in the area. They also made great progress on filling the re-route south of the hot springs. They were very helpful in removing the copious amounts of trash and abandoned gear that was found in the backcountry this season. Without Beth (b), myself and the weed crew would not have been able to get our jobs done. Most of the trails are in pretty good shape. But, here are a few suggestions for next year:

- 1) Remove toilet at Forester Lake and place at Hot Springs (see photos) (coordinate w/ trail crew flights).
- 2) Complete filling re-route, rock pile south of Hot Springs.
- 3) Consider filling crossing of Rattlesnake/Kern to make safer early season (see photos).
- 4) Make more stock friendly steps on lower Rattlesnake trail.
- 5) Remove broken bomb box south of Kern Hot Springs TC camp (perhaps in fall when working on fill project).

H. Camp Areas

a. Conditions

All camp areas are in pretty good shape. The Hot Springs sees the most use and needs constant attention. More litter and duff should be spread in the barren areas adjacent to the bear boxes.

b. Sanitation is primarily a problem at the Hot Springs, mainly because the toilet is in such poor shape. I would recommend replacing the existing one with the one that is presently at Forester Lake.

c. Fire Rings are abundant in the Kern patrol area. I maintained the majority of them and removed quite a few especially along the old Rattlesnake trail corridor with the help of (b). It would be nice to gradually replace all of the ones that are being used with nice three sided ones. I would like to add one more by the camp at the Hot Springs just southeast of the bear box by the toilet as people constantly build a new one there when it is busy. The other ones stayed in great shape there this summer with constant maintenance.

I. Permit System

a. Trailheads

b. Issuing Office

The Inyo NFS did a good job providing information; Mineral King did an adequate job but never patrolled enough to be effective. Sequoia NF out of Springville did a good job giving park info to backpackers but really dropped the ball when it came to stock users. Unfortunately, one private group of three men/six head of stock who had a week

long trip planned in the park had to be turned back to the south. They had a permit but weren't told of the new grazing restrictions when they could have just brought their own feed.

J. Communications

.... hit an all time low early this season. They improved somewhat later. With creativity we can communicate if we use direct, hike to a different location or use a different repeater or use analog. I am still baffled as to why direct worked so much better and had a longer range last year (Please explain this). The Kern base station can no longer hit the repeater. I still think the poor communications compromise our safety especially those who are law enforcement. Also, I constantly turn my radio down as to not scare the visitors in the backcountry with the deafening loud tones prior to the weather or other communications with front country base station. But then, I miss important communications with those who are out in the field because I can no longer hear them! See map for specifics.

K. Projects accomplished

- Worked approximately 30 days on velvet grass & other weeds (11 of which were with the weed crew).
- Worked with Little Five ranger on fire pit removal on old Rattlesnake trail corridor (14 fire pits removed).
- GPS'ed Coyote Pass & Lakes, Rattlesnake, Franklin Pass, Willow meadow cut-off, and Shotgun Pass trails.
- Removed two old campsite rehab. signs.
- Removed trash and bear cable left by visitors at 21" camp.
- Worked on some trail and campsite rehab. at Kern Hot Springs.
- Met with Ming family on private property across from station.
- Raked pine duff around cabin and cleaned/rat proofed cabin (some).

L. Recommendations

- Staff all ranger stations.
- Have spring deadline for backcountry commercial permits.
- Trailhead ranger training (see old appendix).
- Switch bear boxes Funston meadows (One new box each).
- Switch/remove toilets at Forester Lake and Kern Hot Springs.
- Indoor cabin maintenance (paint floor, chinking).

M. Needs for Next Year/Inventory

See attached.



I miss the foxtails!

Little Five Lakes Ranger Station

End of Season Report

Martin Oliver

2008

General Summary

This was my first season as the Little Five Ranger. I was assisted by my wife, Sherri Lisius. Our season began on June 4th with three days of wilderness training at Beate Rock in Giant Forest.

During the week of June 9th -13th, Sherri, my-self, Alison Steiner (Rock Creek Ranger; 3-1-5) and Dave Yemm (backcountry facilities) hiked into Little Five to set up the yurt. Although the May 1st snow pack was approximately 50% of normal, we encountered more snow than we had expected. There was patchy snow on the upper part of the south side of Glacier Pass, the north side was 100% snow covered as was the rest of the way to Little Five with the exception of the upper two thirds of the west facing side of Hand's and Knee's Pass. We spent our first night at Spring Lake and arrived at Little Five mid afternoon of the second day. The yurt set up went smoothly with the four of us. Dave's familiarity with the yurt, the solar system and the electric fence, greatly facilitated the ease of the set up. More information about the set up will be discussed in the Backcountry Facilities section. Due to the snow conditions (very solid in the morning, becoming unstable in the late afternoon) we decided to spend the night at Spring Lake again on the hike back to Mineral King.



We attended EMS training the 16th -18th, the next several days after that were spent shopping, packing and organizing.

On June 23 we drove to east side with Erika Jostad (3-1-1), the following day Sherri and I assisted with loading the helicopter for the mobilization of the Crabtree and Rock Creek Ranger Station.

Sherri and I began hiking from Horseshoe Meadow that same afternoon. We spent several days at Rock Creek with Alison and Erika. This was a great way for us to get familiar with that area and get a feel for what Erika expected from us out in the field. We then spent two nights at Crabtree with Rob and Laura Pilewski (Crabtree and Kern rangers; (b) (7)(F)). We did a bit of EMS and other training during this time.

Sherri, Laura and I then hiked to the Kern Hot Springs via the "Willow Shoot", from there Sherri and I headed out of the Kern and arrived at the Little Five Ranger Station on the afternoon of July 2nd. The station was as we had left it in mid June, the solar system seemed to be working fine, the electric fence was still on and the batteries were still fully charged. Our helicopter mobilization flights arrived on July 3 and 4. Unfortunately while moving boxes during the mobilization I got a "minor" hernia (inguinal strain). I stayed in the backcountry for the next two weeks, during this time I did not go far from the station due to the discomfort caused by the strain. Sherri was of great help in terms of doing patrols and manual labor associated with the job.

On July 16th I hiked out to Mineral King to go to a doctor. The doctor allowed me to return to work doing light duty. I had to hike out to the doctor two more times over the course of the summer for check ups. Because of the injury I was restricted in some capacities. It was not until late July that I did an overnight trip and my comfort on cross-country routes (particularly with a heavy pack) was greatly reduced. I had to rely heavily on Sherri to do any heavy lifting including removing /rearranging rocks in fire rings.

By September I was feeling well enough to do some longer patrols and more cross-country routes.

On September 17th our excess food and gear was taken away by stock and on September 23 and 24 we took down the yurt with the help of Alison (b) (7). Sherri and I left Little Five on the afternoon of the 24th and spent three days making our way back to Mineral King via Shotgun Pass and Farewell Gap.

Visitor Services

Contacts

- **Backpacker:** 198 groups; 585 people
- **Day hiker:** 13 groups; 35 people
- **Commercial use groups:** 5 groups; 34 people

Law Enforcement and Citations

There were a couple of incidents in the Little Five area that may have warranted a citation and one occasion where a citation was written in the field (written by Nina Weisman, 6-1-12).

1. I contacted a party (b) (6) without a permit. I told them they were required to have a permit and asked them to turn around and hike out the way they came. They choose not to, unfortunately Sherri and I gave a mixed message about what we expected them to do, if we had not I would have requested this group get a citation.
2. I encountered one group (b) (6) having a fire at Little Five, when I contacted them they seemed truly surprised by the no fire rule at Little Five and were very apologetic and willing to extinguish and remove any sign of their fire.
3. A contacted a group (b) (6) at Little Five that had no permit, had a dog, were camped on vegetation and were not storing their food properly. I instructed this group to hike back out the way they came. They did not, and I contacted them again two days later at the Big Arroyo and Soda Creek Junction. They hiked out over Sawtooth Pass the next day and were contacted by a law enforcement ranger (b) (7) in Mineral King. Citations were issued by (b) (6).
4. While Nina (b) (7) was patrolling from Bearpaw, she and Sherri encountered a group camped at



Little Five who had left a large amount of food improperly stored while they were out fishing. Nina cited them for improper food storage.

5. Upon returning from a several day extended patrol we found a large fire ring at Little Five. I tried to track down the party responsible but was unable to.
6. I spoke with several groups about campsite selection and the need to camp on bare ground as well as other minimum impact techniques. For a couple of the groups it may be beneficial to follow up with them on the phone to re-iterate the importance of minimum impact camping.

Search, Rescue, Medical Incidents

Date	Location	Type	Evacuation
7/30	L5 Ranger Station	Laceration	Treat and Release

Fatalities

There were no fatalities in the Little Five area this summer.

Weather

As is typical for Sierra weather, most of the days were sunny with blue skies. The temperatures for July and August were generally in the mid 60's during the day and in the 40's at night.

Around the second week of July there was an 8 or 9 day stretch where it rained every day, heavy at times and at least one night until about 2200 hours. But for most of July and August the skies would be clear for about week, then clouds would build and we would get a few days of afternoon thundershowers.



By September the nighttime temperatures started to drop a little and the afternoons saw an increase of winds at Little Five. During the last two weeks of September the nighttime temperature often dropped below freezing.

Fires

At the beginning of the July there were several fires in and around the park. There were a couple of days where it was almost difficult to see the Kaweah's. In late July and August there was a fire the Tehipite area. This fire closed the trail going into that area, but for the most part the only impact to me and the Little Five area was increased radio traffic from fire dispatch.

In late August a fire started south of the park boundary in Kern Canyon, occasionally we could see and smell smoke resulting from this fire.



In early September the Hidden Fire started near the Crystal Cave area. This fire produced smoke (thick at times) in the Little Five area off and on for the rest of September. One of the days I was on Hand's and Knee's Pass I could see flames from this fire

Use Patterns

Backpackers

The first week or two of July was slow with there often being no one in the Little Five campground. Visitation began to pick up by the third and fourth week of July, the later part of this time period corresponded with the decline in mosquitoes. The first and second week of August seemed to be the peak for amount of people staying at Little Five. During this time there were several nights with more than 20 people camped at Little Five. Visitation drastically decreased the week before Labor Day. In September the visitation picked back up a little after Labor Day but by the second week in September things were pretty quiet in the Little Five area.

The most popular trip seems to be from Mineral King, over Timber Gap and Black Rock Pass, around to Lost Canyon and out over Sawtooth Pass. From talking with people doing this loop it sounds as if many inexperienced groups intending to do this loop turned around after reaching Cliff Creek Junction or Pinto Lake.

Other common loops seem to be:

- From Mineral King, over Timber Gap to Cliff Creek, Bearpaw, Big Arroyo, Little Five, Black Rock Pass and back out over Timber Gap. Or the reverse of this trip.
 - A variation on the above trip is to start and end out of Crescent Meadow (skipping Timber Gap).
 - From Mineral King, over Franklin Pass to Forester Lake and then either up Lost Canyon and out over Sawtooth Pass or around to Little Five, over Black Rock Pass and out over Timber Gap.
- The amount of people I encountered doing this loop increased later in the summer.

Backpackers were generally encountered while patrolling to the upper Big Arroyo and Nine Lakes, many of these groups were headed to Mt. Whitney. I heard through Nina (b) (7) and Rob (b) (7) that there seemed to be more people on the High Sierra Trail this summer than in recent years. I had no reference to compare the use I was seeing, but I did feel I often missed the groups on the High Sierra Trail. I would go down to the Big Arroyo in the late morning and early afternoon and would often be headed back to Little Five by 1600. It seems possibly that groups arriving at the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin didn't arrive until after I had returned to Little Five. Sherri and I did spend several nights in the Big Arroyo near the camp area, on those nights very few other people were camped there.

Stock

I saw no private groups and only one commercial stock group (three head; Cedar Grove Pack Station) in the Little Five Patrol area. The Hockett trail crew was in the area for about three weeks and they had 15 head of stock, see below for more information.

Administrative

The Hockett trail crew (with 15 head of stock) was camped at Lower Lost Canyon for about 10 days (August 8th- 17th); during most of this time only some of the stock were with them. They were then in the Big Arroyo (camped just downstream of Patrol Cabin) for two weeks (August 18th- September 2). The 15 head of stock were there the whole time.

Commercial

In July I contacted four commercial use groups; the Sierra Institute, the Wilderness Education Association, Walden West Backpack Adventures and Outward Bound. Walden West Backpack Adventures was the only group to have a copy of their commercial use permit with them. This group was also carrying food storage canisters.

The Outward Bound group did not have their commercial use permit in possession but they do have one. Both instructors were new to working in SEKI, I informed them that in the future they needed to carry their commercial use permit as well as identification. I also ran into a leader of another Outward Bound group while he was out on a day hike. I did not ask for his commercial use permit, but he did tell me they had no food storage canisters and were hanging their food (they were currently camped in Nine Lakes Basin).

The Sierra Institute group had no commercial use permit in possession and it was determined that they were operating without a permit. They were also not using canisters but hanging their food (they also had spent several days camped in Nine Lakes Basin).

The Wilderness Education Association did not have a commercial use permit in possession. I contacted (b) (7) Sierra to check on the status of their permit but never heard back. The name on the application would probably be Jim Lustig, the commercial name may also be Aztec Adventures. This group was carrying food storage canisters.

In September I contacted John Barry from the Cedar Grove Pack Station, he was with two clients and three head of stock. He had no commercial use permit in possession He had bear proof panniers, feed and a high line.

I was somewhat shocked that some of these groups were not carrying food storage canisters. If a bear were to get food from a large group (10+ people), this could have a great impact to future backpackers to these areas. Additionally two of the camps I saw had large tarps set up (possibly for shade), these were over sparsely vegetated areas. I do not believe people were sleeping under them but gear was being stored under them which resulted in the vegetation in that area becoming matted, which is then more likely to attract others to camp there. In my opinion, it is a privilege for groups to conduct a business within a National Park and we should expect the highest standards of resource protection from them.

Natural Resources

Bear Activity

In the area immediately around Little Five we saw no bears. During the last week of September we did see bear tracks in the lower Little Five area and just below the Lost Canyon Junction.

Bears were reported being seen on several occasions on the Cliff Creek trail below Pinto Lake. We saw lot's of bear scat in this area the times we walked this section of trail.

Bear scat was observed in the Big Arroyo below the Patrol Cabin as well as in Rattlesnake. I received second hand information that a bear was in the trail crew camp while they were camped in Lower Rattlesnake, I do not know the details of this.

One group reported seeing a bear sniff around the food storage locker at Franklin Lakes.

Wildlife

I saw what I thought to be surprisingly few yellow-bellied marmots in the Little Five ranger station area. There were a couple of local marmots that we saw just a handful of times around the Yurt. There was an occasional one in the meadow by the lake or on or near the large boulder that is near the campsites on the hill just across the lake from the yurt. Throughout the rest of the patrol area we would occasionally see them in higher elevation areas. We rarely saw more than one or two at time and very few young.



We enjoyed watching the tadpoles (tree frog) develop in the pool in front of the yurt. This pool dried up the third week of August and we are unsure if the tadpoles had become frogs yet. Early in the season we observed many tree frog tadpoles in a tarn along the High Sierra Trail just as you climb out of the Big Arroyo. When Sherri returned there in late July most of the tadpoles were dead (hundreds of tadpoles). She collected some and these were taken to Danny Boiano (the parks aquatic biologist).

We saw almost no mule deer in the ranger station vicinity but they were common in the Pinto Lake area, Big Arroyo, Big Five area, Lost Canyon area and lower Little Five area (below Long Lake). We received many comments about the deer at Pinto Lake and the nights we spent there we understood why people were commenting. The deer at Pinto seem to have very little fear of humans and are very bold about coming up and grabbing peoples packs, clothes, hiking poles or anything else that may be salty from sweat.

In mid to late August the Golden Mantled ground squirrels became very active around the station. They seemed to be most active within the first few hours after the sun hit the area and were great morning entertainment.

We saw pikas only a few times; the southwest side of Glacier Pass, the northeast side of Glacier Pass, on the ridge between upper Big Five Lakes and Little Five Lakes, Hamilton Lakes.

We saw a pine marten just north of the Kern Hot Springs and a coyote just south of the Hot Springs. Coyotes were seen only occasionally but we heard them one night in Soda Creek and occasionally at night near the ranger station.

In late August we began to see more Sooty grouse. I observed them on both sides of Black Rock Pass as well as in the Big Arroyo.

In September we saw golden eagle's a couple of time's; once near Black Rock Pass and once above the station.

And of course the mosquitoes.....they were bad from the time we got to the station in the beginning of July, by the third or fourth week of July they started to taper off and by mid August they were hardly noticeable.

Vegetation

I assisted Eric Frenzel (b) (7) with the end of season meadow clipping at Middle Rattlesnake. No additional meadow monitoring was done in the Little Five area due to the lack of stock use.

I am sure this happens every year, but the more popular camp areas (here at Little Five, the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin area, some of the sites at lower Big Five) begin to look a little barren by mid to late August. We worked on minimizing the vegetation trampling here at Little Five but unless you are around on a nightly basis it can be difficult. If I am here next year I would like to come up with a better plan for the Big Arroyo and lower Big Five.



In the 2006 and 2007 end of season report it was noted that there was a lack of vegetation around the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin; it seems the area immediately around the cabin did not get camped on as much this year as it may have in the past, there is currently some vegetation there but the soil type being dominated by decomposing granite would generally not support abundant vegetation.

I did observe *Draba cruciata*, a park listed special status plant, growing on the east side of Timber Gap. This is a known population and it seemed to be doing well.

Resource Projects

Early in the season Sherri and I worked on the Black Rock Pass trail about a half mile up from the station. There is abundant runoff in this area in early season creating several sections of trail with standing or flowing water. Hikers would either have to go through the water or go around, often on fragile vegetation. We worked on clearing water bars and creating better channels for the water to drain and in one area we re-routed the trail to more durable soils.



An ongoing project was trying to minimize the footprint of the camp area here at Little Five. As visitation began to pick up tents began to inch onto sparsely vegetated areas. To minimize this we regularly added litter and duff to areas we didn't want people to camp on and placed rocks and logs to establish campsite boundaries. On the small hill across from the yurt we put a restoration sign up to keep people from camping on the lupine. Additionally we re-did the sign that was inside the locker and placed it on the outside so more people would see and read it. It seems that with more people carrying canisters, they never even look in the lockers.

In trying to assess how many groups are carrying food storage canisters, we asked almost every group we contacted if they were carrying a canister. This information was recorded and will be discussed in the food storage section and be passed on to Rachel Mazur the parks wildlife biologist.

I had hoped to re-build many of the fire pits in the area, making the jumble of rocks into a neat three-sided fire pit. Do to my injury, moving and lifting heavy rocks was out of the question. This could be a good resource project for next year. Other suggestions for next year would be to use the Kern Fuels Method to assess firewood availability at the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin camp area and also to work on improving the campsites at this location. Another suggestion would be to make the established camp sites at lower Big Five more obvious to help discourage people from camping to close to the lake.

Cultural Resource

Historic

The Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin seemed to withstand another summer. It seems as if people have not been camping in the immediate vicinity as much as has been reported in the past. Early in the season we did find several shingles lying on the ground near the cabin. As firewood becomes sparser in the immediate camping area I fear campers may turn to removing lose shingles and boards from the cabin. The current sign on the cabin suggests people not sleep or store food inside. As the cabin is always locked, this sign should be removed and replaced with a sign stating the year the cabin was built, the years it was used as a ranger cabin and to not disturb it in order to preserve it.

While removing and cleaning fire rings in the upper Rattlesnake area with Laura (b) (7) we found the bottom few logs to an old cabin neither of us new existed. It is in a currently used camp site and not far from the trail so I am sure it is documented. Approximate UTM's: (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B)

Backcountry Facilities

Ranger Station

The yurt continues to be holding up well. As mentioned at the start, with four people including Dave directing us, the setup went quickly and smoothly. For the most part things seemed to make it through the winter OK. The only problem was one of the storage boxes below the platform leaked. The plywood lids have been chewed by marmot and the tarps covering the platform were in poor shape. It appears that at some point in time there was caulking that helped seal the plywood lid to the boxes but this has worn off. The only real damage resulting from the leak was the box itself was moldy, as well as the foam mattress pads and mattress covers. The inside of the boxes were sprayed and wiped with a bleach solution, the foam mattresses were also sprayed with a bleach solution and the mattress covers were discarded. We didn't use the mattresses because they did not fit in our tent and we weren't sure how we felt about sleeping on them due to the mold. They should be replaced if they appear moldy next summer. A new tarp was sent in during the demob so hopefully this will help keep things dry over the winter.



One of the only hang-ups we had with the set-up itself was with the solar system. Dave thought at first that something was wrong with the charge controller or possibly the batteries were getting old and not carrying a full charge, but he figured out the connection points on solar panels were slightly corroded. With a little cleaning and a thicker gauge wire the system worked perfectly all summer.

The door was protected during the winter with the old door (see photo) and seemed to be in OK shape but Dave did do a little shaving of the frame to keep it from sticking. The dome was left under the porch and was in good condition.



The drip edge may need to be replaced at some point in time in the near future, the marmots seem to chew on it and it is becoming a bit tattered from being repeatedly attached and removed from the platform. As noted above the plywood boards covering the boxes have been chewed by marmots, these should be replaced. A new layer of caulking should also be applied.

The metal storage bins should be considered for replacement. The bomb box, though cumbersome, is adequate for food storage but I doubt if the other boxes would keep a bear out. The box in southwest corners leaks unless sealed perfectly and it along with the box by the porch no longer have a way of being locked. The half buried 55 gallon drum does an excellent job of keeping food cold; particularly items stored in the bottom half of the barrel.

We dug and started using a new toilet in late August; it is located approximately 20 feet uphill (to the ~east) of the old toilet. The plywood toilet frame should be considered for replacement. Sherri and I, along with the friends that visited were a little scared to use it at first.

We also dug a new sump, this is located about 10 feet east of the old one. We continued to use the old one as well, it just fills quickly.

Signs

The signs at both ends of Little Claire Lake were taken down. The sign at the north end said “Camping prohibited within 100’ of the shoreline”, the sign at the south end said the same as well as “No campfires within Little Claire lake basin”. I found no fire rings at Little Claire this year and only a little evidence of people camping to close to water (along the south side of the outlet just off the trail), I am curious to see what happens with these signs removed. The signs have temporarily been hidden just off the trail (see attached description, pictures and map), they possibly should be left there to see how things go next summer.

On the use trail that goes up to Long Lake, there is a sign that says “No fires above this point”, I think it may actually be above 10,400’ and should be moved to the correct elevation or possibly removed altogether. We found little evidence of Long Lake getting much camping use.

Part way through the summer we placed a restoration sign at the Little Five camp area on the hill across from the yurt. There are a couple of suitable tent sites on the hill but people were beginning to camp more frequently on the lupine. We put the sign up to keep people off the lupine but now people seem to think they can’t camp there at all. Removing this sign would be OK but it needs to be made clear where people should and shouldn’t camp.

As you enter the Little Five camping area there are “no fires” sign’s coming from both the Big Arroyo and the Big Five area but not from the Black Rock Pass area. A majority of the hikers are

entering Little Five from Black Rock Pass and a “no fires” sign from this direction should be considered.

A “no fires” sign at Pinto Lake would be helpful, illegal fire rings were common here along with one that was not extinguished properly and spread to approximately 20’ in diameter.

Signs that say something to the effect of “wood fire’s prohibited” such as the one in the Big Arroyo as your headed towards Nine Lakes Basin may give people the impression that it is OK to burn their trash.

Most of the food storage lockers no longer have a minimum impact sheet in them or if they do they are in bad shape. A new minimum impact sheet should be placed in each one or something less wordy and more personalized such as what Roxanne Evert has done. We may want to consider putting these on the outside of the locker because with more people carrying canisters people often never even open the locker up.

Trails

Trail Activities (work accomplished)

Trail activities were dominated almost entirely of walking the trails, talking with visitors and cleaning and removing fire rings. We hiked approximately 700 miles, contacted approximately 200 backpacking groups (~ 600 people), cleaned 79 fire rings and removed 37 fire rings.

Due to my injury, at the beginning of the summer we mostly did day patrols from the station. By late July we began to do more overnight patrols. In September I spent about half of my nights away from the station.

As noted above we did a small amount of trail work on the Black Rock Pass trail.

Problem Areas

For the most part trails in the Little Five area are in great shape and visitors often comment on how well maintained the trails are.

There are only a couple of problem areas that should be noted, these include:

- The Big Arroyo trail downstream of the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin. This is one of the few trails visitors have complained about. I can see where people lose the trail through the meadows but overall it would be difficult to actually get lost in this area. Trailhead rangers should let hikers know that this trail is not maintained. It should be considered to stop listing this section as a trail, or place a “trail no maintained” sign up.
- Sawtooth Pass trail. The east side of the pass is very well cairned and by mid to late summer the path is generally obvious. Parts of this can be difficult before the snow is totally melted out. The west side gives people trouble but once again by mid to late summer a main pathway is fairly obvious. I generally recommend people go down the west side, not up it. People should be given good information about what to expect from it and made to understand it is not an officially maintained trail.
- The trail to upper Big Five Lakes. The trail is fairly obvious until you get to the last two lakes. From here the trail becomes indistinct at times and is worse in early season when this area can be very wet. This area doesn’t see a lot of traffic and no one has complained about to me but I

thought it should be noted. Additionally if a stock group were to try to go to the upper grazing area they may have some difficulties and could also cause resource damage to the meadow areas the “trail” goes through.

- Shotgun Pass Trail. This trail is fairly well cairned but like the lower Big Arroyo trail it’s hard to call it maintained and a “trail not maintained” sign might be beneficial.

Camp Areas

Conditions

At Little Five it took me until early August before I started to get a feel for what impacts people were causing. At this time I started to be more proactive about influencing where people camped by lining sites with rocks and placing litter and duff in areas I didn’t want people to camp. The majority of people camp in the immediate vicinity of the food storage locker. Without regular work this area can start to look like a large dirt lot. Occasionally groups (often larger groups) camped on the hill across from the ranger station. People were beginning to camp among the lupine in this area until we put the restoration sign up.

Throughout the summer there is a constant flow of people through Little Five, requiring regular work to keep it from looking overused.



The camp area at the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin is probably the most used camp area in the Little Five patrol area. There are five sites in the vicinity of the food storage locker that have fire rings and for the most part only three of these are used. At the start of the season another fire ring kept appearing in a barren area but with a little restoration work the area has remained fire ring free for most of the summer. Overall, by mid August the area around the food storage locker and one of the other commonly used sites began to look over used. The Big Arroyo area, like the camp area at Little Five, could benefit from near constant attention to keep it looking better. Part of the problem is that any logs around the camp area seem to dissolve over the course of the summer as they are hacked away at for fire wood. As mentioned earlier, next years ranger may want to consider using the Kern Fuels Methods to determine firewood availability in the area. Additional recommendations for the area would be to close the camp sites northwest of the trail and re-do the fire rings in the other sites.

Although far fewer people camp at lower Big Five Lake than at the Big Arroyo or Little Five I feel it should be commented on. For the most part the established sites with fire rings show signs of little or only moderate use. The sites can be difficult to find, leading people to camp in non-established sites. Because of this, we removed a large fire ring from a site too close to the lake and on several other occasions we did restoration work to discourage camping at other locations too close to the lake. The one established site near the lake is the



only one without a fire pit. We removed illegal fire pits there twice. In order to decrease the damage near the lake, I would recommend not allowing any camping between the trail and lake and possibly making pathways (lining with rocks) more obvious to the established sites.

It seems that camp sites located at the food storage locker at the Lost Canyon Junction see only light use. Most of the use in Lost Canyon is scattered throughout the canyon where there are several good sites. Columbine Lake seems to be heavily used and it is apparent that people often do not make the effort to find camping away from water.

Although Moraine Lake seems to see a fair amount of use, it handles it well. There are only two existing fire rings in the area, both too close to water. I thought about removing the one that is within feet of the water, but without constant patrols, it would be hard to discourage people from camping in the sites close to the lake. However, it sends a very mixed message to visitors when they are told to never camp within 100 ft of water and then they get to a locker with a map showing a campsite a mere 10 ft from water. It may be worth the effort to try and relocate these sites closer to the bear locker.

Sanitation

YUCK!!!!.....picked up way too much used toilet paper!

As noted in last years report, sanitation is a concern at some of the more common camping areas. Starting in late July, large amounts of toilet paper began to pop-up around the Little Five camp area. The used toilet paper was often found under small rocks, under an inch or so of soil or just out in the open and feces was often present as well. It was also not uncommon to find toilet paper and feces in campsites.

We began to make sure and mention to most visitors that we had been picking up lots of used toilet paper and people needed to pack it out.

I am not sure how to convince people they need to go far from camp, make every effort to dig at least a six inch hole and they need to pack out their toilet paper. I imagine a pit toilet is out of the question at Little Five and I know it brings up other issues but something needs to be done. We considered posting instructions on where to go to the bathroom in the Little Five area. Another suggestion was to give out zip lock bags at the permit station for people to pack their used toilet paper out in.

The pit toilet at Forester Lake is quite full, and should be filled in next year. I do not think a new toilet needs to be dug. I don't think the current one gets much use, there is no sign for it and without a pack station operating out of Mineral King the east side of Forester Lake sees far less use than the west side.. The toilet and platform are made of plastic and still in relatively good shape (other than that the seat is not attached to the toilet body), it could possibly used to replace the toilet at the Kern Hot Springs which is not in good shape.

Fire Rings

Cleaning and removing fire rings was a constant part of our daily work. As noted above we cleaned approximately 79 fire rings and removed approximately 37

In camp areas like the Big Arroyo it definitely seemed to make a difference to stay on top of keeping them clean. If they were kept clean people seemed more likely to keep them that way.

We removed what seems like a lot of fire rings, these were removed from areas where fire's are illegal, there was not suitable camping, other nearby fire rings existed or they seemed to have been used only once or not in a long time. I worked with Laura (b) (7) to remove fire rings from an old section of trail in upper Rattlesnake. We removed five from that trail section and nine others in the area. It was really nice to get to team up with another ranger to work solely on cleaning and removing fire rings in a given area. The Rattlesnake Canyon area has a lot of scattered camp areas on both sides of the creek, I think planning a day or two every summer to team up with another ranger to work on cleaning and removing fire rings in this area is a good idea.

Firewood Availability

I had hoped to use the Kern Fuels Methods to assess the availability of fire wood at the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin camping area, unfortunately by the time we got some of the needed tools to do this we were out of time. This is something I would strongly recommend doing next year. At the fire rings in this area we would often find very large pieces of wood, pieces of decaying logs and sawn off limbs. It seems smaller pieces of dead and down would in the immediate area are becoming sparser. I would recommend considering a temporary ban on fires at this location.



Food Storage

Overall, I was impressed by the number of visitors voluntarily carrying a canister (76%). We asked almost all groups if they were carrying a canister. [Of the 196 groups contacted, 150 were carrying a canister and of the 46 that did not have a canister, ...were hanging... were using lockers and ...unknown how they were storing their food.](#) It is a credit to the trailhead offices that so many visitors are carrying canisters when they are just recommended.



The Monarch Lakes food storage lockers need to be removed or replaced, the lid's are completely free from the boxes and people are still using them for food storage.

Permit System

Trailheads

Due to my injury I hiked in and out of Mineral King three different times during the course of the summer. I hiked both in and out over Timber Gap, out over Sawtooth and both in and out over Glacier Pass, all three of these have the same starting/ending trailhead. At the end of the season we hiked out over Farewell Gap. In general the trails were clean and in good shape. All three of the times I hiked back into Little Five were on a Friday, and the Sawtooth/Timber Gap parking area was full by late morning.

Issuing Office

The majority of the visitors to the Little Five area were coming from Mineral King. Overall most of the people were informed of the basic regulations. However, on a few occasions visitors (including friends of ours) told us they received very little information while getting their permit.

My hikes into Mineral King allowed me to talk with rangers there a little bit, and on all three occasions they commented on the lack of scheduled trail days. They were well aware that some of the backcountry areas on the Mineral King side of the divide were not receiving the attention they needed due to lack of funding and patrol time. To our knowledge the Mineral King trailhead rangers had no scheduled overnight patrols. The Mineral King trailhead rangers need to be scheduled/required to do at least some overnight patrols. If the trailhead rangers have not been to an area first hand it can be difficult to give accurate, helpful information to visitors.

This has been commented on in past reports, but there is a map hanging in the Mineral King ranger station with cross country routes drawn on it. My understanding is that the rangers at Mineral King do not recommend or tell people about these routes unless the visitor first asks about them. However, on more than one occasion I talked to people who had seen these routes and decided to try them. Some of these people were capable of doing these routes and others were not. The map with these routes is a great tool and should be used but not made public.

One of my biggest complaints is not being able to read people's permits, the printed one's that are issued from the Inyo NF, Yosemite NP and sometimes from Ash Mountain and Lodgepole are great because everything is very clear. It seems that sometimes permit stations have visitors write in their own name and address, I understand that this may be easier but it can be awkward when I have to ask people for this information again. It is helpful to have the full name and address in case of emergency or the person is doing something wrong and we need their contact information.

It would also be helpful if we were present for part of the trailhead rangers training. This way we could give pertinent information about our patrol area. For instance, I encountered many groups that had planned on hanging their food in places like Nine Lakes Basin or Lost Canyon, while carrying a canister is not required in this area there are very few trees where an adequate food hang could be made from.

Communications

Radio communications were done nearly entirely in digital this year.

For most of the summer the base station at Little Five worked very well. From the base station we generally had excellent communication with most of the Kern rangers (we could not hear (b) (7) who was on the Paradise repeater) and with some effort we could also communicate with George Durkee (b) (7) on the Gould repeater as well as with Nina (b) (7) on the Paradise repeater (for this we would often have to switch the radio from digital to analog). Being able to communicate with both (b) (7) and (b) (7) was useful early in the summer when there were radio troubles. On at least a half dozen days dispatch and other front country units were unable to communicate on backcountry channels. They were able to hear us but unable to transmit. During these times if needed I could contact (b) (7) or (b) (7) and they could reach dispatch on command.

Because of the good radio communications here at Little Five all the Kern rangers (excluding (b)) called their out of service location to me and then I relayed this to dispatch. This process seemed to work well.

In early September the speaker part of the base station stopped working but everything else seemed to still work fine.

There is an attached write up with more detailed radio information including where the radio worked well and where it didn't.

Needs for Next Year

Gear

- Osprey Aether 70 backpack
- Headlamps for nighttime searches
- Pocket rocket fuel
- Bear Vault Solo canisters for shorter trips

Yurt

- Current superintendent's compendium
- Bear lockers to replace metal boxes at ranger station
- New plywood lids for boxes under platform (96"32.5")
- Larger wash basin
- New foam mattress
- Non-stick fry pan
- Colander
- Can opener (one that works! Not a cheap one)
- Wilderness management plan
- Electric fence signs
- New toilet platform
- New axe or repair handle of old axe
- WD-40
- Duct Tape
- Cordless drill battery (extra, Dave should have information for this)
- Caulking
- Ground cord for solar system-plastic coating coming off

EMS supplies

- Non stick gauze pads
- Miscellaneous meds
- Station blood pressure cup
- Digital thermometer

Office supplies

- Clip board
- Steno pad
- A few pen's and pencil's
- Hanging file folders
- Stapler

Maps

- Lodgepole 7.5 minute quad. (2)
-

Books

- Book "My Ranger Years" by Gordan Wallace
- The Mineral King History book by Linda Wallace

General/Other

Recommendations

- Continue to fully fund the Little Five Ranger Station. While the Little Five patrol area sees fewer visitors than those patrol areas on the crest, the patrol area is huge and there needs to be someone here from early July through September. The six day week is needed in order to come anywhere close to hitting all the major areas on a somewhat regular basis. Even with both Sherri and I working and sometimes going in different directions there still seemed to be an impossible amount of work to get done.
- Backcountry rangers train trailhead rangers regarding issues in their areas.
- Replace or remove the broken food storage lockers at Monarch Lake.
- Fund three Mineral King trailhead rangers and require them to do overnight trips.
- Increase awareness about proper disposal of human waste and consider ways to get people to pack out their toilet paper such as giving out ziplock bags for used toilet paper with permits.
- Close toilet at Forester Lake, the platform may be able to be used at the Kern Hot Springs.
- Remove partially buried 55 gallon barrel from Pinto Lake.
- Remove "no fires" sign at Long Lake.
- Complete Kerns Fuels Methods for the Big Arroyo Patrol Cabin camping area and continue to document what is being what is being burned at this location. Consider temporarily restricting fires at this location.
- Create a wilderness restoration crew that travels throughout the backcountry building good three sided fire pits and closing or restoring overused camp sites. It is difficult and unsafe due to the heavy lifting of rocks and other materials for single individuals to do. Backcountry rangers would then be able to more effectively maintain these sites.
- New, more personal, minimum impact signs on the outside of food storage lockers (similar to what Roxanne Evert has done).
- Change wilderness user group size to 10 people or less. Larger groups tend to be more likely to do more resource damage.
- Move established campsites at Moraine Lake farther from the lake shore.
- No camping at lower Big Five between the trail and the lake.

- “No fires” sign at Pinto Lake and as you come into the Little Five area from Back Rock Pass.
- Replace the sign at the Big Arroyo Cabin with a more pertinent one.

Pertinent Inventory

See attached inventory.

Case Cards

Date	Time	Name	Reason	Location	Case Card #
07/03		Smith	Visitor Information		080796
07/09			V.A.; gave bug juice		080797
07/13		Gundy	Illegal Fire	Little Five	080798
07/16		Sloan	Found lost tent		080799
07/23		Gonzalez	V.A.; gave bug juice	Little Five	080800
07/23		Jones	No wilderness permit	Black Rock Pass Trail	080803
07/29		Short	Camped on vegetation	Big Arroyo	080804
07/30	1315	Short	V.A.; EMS	Little Five R.S.	081217
08/05	1930	Mains	Camped on vegetation	Little Five	081218
08/17	1930	Schroeter	V.A.; tired hiker	Black Rock Pass Trail	081219
08/21	1800	James	V.A.; borrowed pan	Little Five R.S.	081220
08/29	0830	Geise	No wilderness permit/dog	Little Five	081221
08/29	1600	Moorison	V.A.; fixed water pump	Little Five RS	081222
09/19	1700	Unknown	Put out escaped fire	Moraine Lake	081223

McClure Ranger Station

2008 End of Season Report

Ranger Dave Gordon

General Summary

This was a less than normal snowpack season (about 70% of normal for northern Kings Canyon), and snow remained on passes through the end of July. Travel across passes and creeks required usual caution for early season—Muir Pass had difficulty due to “suncups” and post-holing on snow; Evolution Creek crossing, below Evolution Meadow, was swift and deep for a couple of weeks, but most hikers used the alternate route through the meadow. Mosquitoes and flies were prominent in Evolution Valley until mid-August, and yellow-jackets were bothersome at lower elevations in September. Hiker and stock visitation was consistent with my previous seasons at McClure (1999 – 2001).

Visitor Contacts / Patrols

	Visitor Contacts	Miles Patrolled
June (11 days)	56	63
July	427	168
August	628	201
September	243	174
October (7 days)	7	23
Totals	1361	619

Contacts were primarily backpackers except for about a half-dozen day-hikers contacted near Piute Creek (from Muir Trail Ranch) and 18 stock groups (14 commercial, 3 administrative, 1 private) consisting of 88 stock users (including clients) with 184 stock. Most commercial groups were from High Sierra Pack Station. Rainbow Pack Station, Rock Creek Pack Station, and Bishop Pack Outfitters had one trip each through Evolution Valley.

Law Enforcement

Unless enroute to an incident, every group was checked for a Wilderness Permit and asked how their food was protected from bears. Two individuals did not have the required permit, and only a few groups chose to hang food as opposed to using bear-proof canisters.

One citation was written in June for no permit. 32 LE case cards were issued throughout the summer for the following infractions: verbal warnings for tents(s) on vegetation (5), improper food storage (4), and no permit (1), “unknown suspect” violations for illegal campfires (16), unattended fires (2), littering (1), and improper disposal of human body waste (3).

Search, Rescue, and Medical Incidents

Date	Location	Type	Disposition
7/1/2008	Sapphire Lake	Ruptured Appendix	Helicopter Evac
7/3-4/2008	JMT to Muir Pass	Search	Located 7/4
7/7/2008	JMT to Piute Creek	Search	Located 7/7
8/9/2008	McClure Meadow	Head Laceration	Helicopter evac
8/27/08	JMT to Piute Creek	Search	Located 8/28

There were four minor medicals involving advice for sore knee(s) (3), and advice for minor altitude sickness (1). Also, there were four occurrences when I delivered emergency messages to hikers or trail crew, and provided the use of a satellite phone (8/10, 8/20, 8/22, and 8/27).

Weather

It was an unusually warm and dry summer with several monsoonal weather patterns that produced little precipitation at McClure—no more than ½” per storm, and infrequent lightning. On October 4th, a winter storm produced between 2 and 3 inches of snow at McClure Meadow (while writing this report).

Fires / Smoke

Lightning caused fires (1000+) in northern California produced considerable smoke in late June and early July. In mid-July, a lightning caused fire in Tehipite Valley eventually grew to over 10,000 acres and produced smoke in afternoons during August and September—a few days the visibility was reduced to under 10 miles. No fires were reported or observed in the McClure patrol area.

Use Patterns

Near normal hiker visitation consisted of the following approximate proportions of reported routes: 50% entire John Muir Trail (JMT) (almost entirely north to south); 25% North Lake to/from South Lake; 25% miscellaneous, including increased amount of cross-country travel between Evolution Basin and Goddard Canyon via Ionian Basin or Davis Lake, partly due to information obtained on the internet.

Fewer groups were encountered than previous seasons consisting of Boy Scouts (7), college classes (2), and a Mountain Travel Sobek group with stock support.

Commercial stock was not seen in Evolution Valley until August 18th, in spite of a “normal” grazing opening date of August 1st for McClure and Colby Meadows (Darwin and Evolution Meadows were closed to grazing this summer). Administrative stock was used weekly to resupply the CCC crew at Goddard Camp. Administrative stock was also used to mob and demob the ranger station. Only one private stock group was contacted with three llamas at Evolution Lake (Muir Pass to Florence Lake).

Natural Resources

No bears or bear scat were seen all summer by me. There was one report of a bear observed near the Goddard Bridge, but no reports of aggressive bear activity or food obtained by a bear.

Wildlife observed consisted of several coyotes, two Black-tailed Jackrabbits, and 9 pikas. No pine martens or weasel were seen this summer—a disappointment. Normal deer patterns seemed to have occurred.

Meadows that were open to grazing in Evolution Valley (Colby and McClure) experienced light to moderate use. Grazing near Goddard Bridge (Cony Camp) was moderate mainly due to administrative stock, but without apparent excess. No grazing seems to have occurred up Goddard Canyon. Colby and Evolution Meadows were monitored for residual biomass in September.

Ranger Station

The cabin is in good condition after all the work that was done, the past several years. Improvements this summer include: three new solar batteries; a cut-log door step that makes for a safer entry/exit (replaces rock step); repair of marmot-damaged propane tank enclosure; a new 5' fee, 3.5' diameter grey water sump (filled with 3"-6" diameter rocks); external lockable latches installed on window shutters; sealing of roofline cracks that had allowed mice to enter the attic. The cabin was stocked with about 15 rounds of wood, chopped to wood burner size, for emergency winter use.

Signs

Four new signs arrived at the Ranger Station October 1st and will be erected in June 2009: a sign to be placed at the trailhead; two signs, one each side of Evolution Creek crossing below Evolution Meadow, indicating the safer, alternate route through the meadow in times of high water flow; and a "stock camp" sign to be placed at the new site just west of the old stock camp (closed for rehab).

Trails

A CCC crew worked 2 ½ months reconstructing the first (lower) four miles of the Goddard Canyon trail. Several reroutes were completed to avoid fragile meadow areas or to improve trail safety. Additional trail rework was down on the HMT down canyon from Goddard Bridge. The HMT is in good shape from Piute Creek to Muir Pass.

Unmaintained trails to "Hell-for-Sure Pass" and to "Lake 11,106" are in poor condition with routes difficult to find without route-finding ducks (cairns). Unmaintained trails to McGee Lakes and Darwin Lakes are in fair condition with minimal difficulty in travel or route-finding.

Camp Areas

Early season, there were an excessive number of fire rings (both illegal and extraneous) and many fire ring had grown to gigantic proportions, requiring major rework to reduce to standard, ground-level, three-sided pits. 167 fire rings were cleaned and/or reduced

throughout the summer, and 41 were eliminated (35 extraneous; 16 illegal, mostly above 10,000 feet in upper Goddard Canyon, Evolution Basin and Darwin Bench).

Firewood is scarce near most of the major campsites along the JMT (especially at Piute Creek Bridge). Toilet paper, not properly buried, was a problem at many of these campsites.

Food Storage

About 99% of contacts had bear-proof canisters. Several groups that had hung food did not know the proper counter-balance technique and were shown how to do it. Several “through hikers” on the JMT, without canisters, were told that they needed to use food storage lockers and where to find them.

Permit System

Most permit issuing offices provided good park regulation information along with the permits—notable exceptions were some of the westside USFS Ranger Stations, which did not always supply park regulations and/or proper food hanging instructions for those few without canisters.

Communications

Radio communications after some early season glitches were mostly good using the Evolution Repeater. Radio contacts were possible for most of the patrol area. “Poor” contact areas included the (b) (7)(F) and the (b) (7)(F). When contact was made, reception on my radio was almost always strong and clear. (It was reported to me by (b) , that my transmissions to (b) Sierra were often the poorest of all the backcountry.)

Recommendations

1. Keep old stock camp at Evolution Meadow closed and designate a new stock camp, 100 yards west (fire rings exists; some fallen tree removal would increase the size of camp; place “stock camp” sign on trail). This site is only 50 yards from JMT, yet well hidden by a granite knoll).
2. Keep Darwin Meadow closed to grazing—meadow is too fragile (muddy) to support grazing without significant visual impact.
3. Supply wilderness rangers with wristwatch type GPS units (such as Garmin Forerunner 205, which works well in trees). The units would be especially useful in locating victims of SPOT 911 alerts.
4. Suggest requiring toilet paper to be packed out—an excess of partially buried toilet paper was found near campsites this summer.

McClure Ranger Station
Needs for 2009

- 3 rolls duct tape
- 1 black marker pen
- 30 small, clear plastic bags
- 12 large, brown plastic bags
- 12 burlap sacks
- 6 mouse traps
- 1 gallon unleaded gas (for chainsaw)
- 1 qt bar oil
- 1 pump repair kit for Coleman 3 burner stove
- 1 fireplace lighter
- 1 hand sanitizer
- 2 pad white paper, 8 ½ x 11
- 1 RJ Secor book
- 1 package 5"x7" white cards (ruled)
- 2 sliding-bolt door/gate latch (lockable, zinc plated steel)
- 24 AA batteries
- 2 packages paper towels
- 2 boxes matches, strike anywhere

McClure Ranger Station
Consumables Inventory (on hand October 2008)

- 15 gallons propane
- 5 propane canisters
- 14 rolls toilet paper
- 2 packages paper towels
- 3 quarts window cleaner
- 1 gallon simple green cleaner
- 2 gallons white gas (Coleman stove)
- 20 AAAs alkaline
- 26 AAs alkaline
- 4 AAs lithium
- 1 gallon bleach
- 1 quart laundry detergent
- 1 pint dish soap

Sierra Crest Sub-District Bench and Monarch Divide Ranger Stations End of Season Report 2008

Ranger: Roxanne Everett

General Summary

I was hired as a “roving” backcountry ranger, to work the Bench and Monarch Divide Ranger Stations as well as a remote site at Dusy Basin. Unfortunately I injured myself early in the season so did not get to Dusy Basin, working in the front country instead while I healed. As such, I was at Bench from 7/4-7/17; front country from 7/22-8/10; Monarch from 8/15-9/6 and Bench (2nd patrol period for Bench) from 9/7-9/17.

Visitor Services

Contacts are broken up into Bench, Monarch, Paradise Valley and Miscellaneous. Bench is anything in the Bench Lake Patrol area or on the JMT. Monarch is anything in the Monarch Patrol area up to the JMT. Miscellaneous includes several day hikes that I did while in the front country. Paradise Valley is separate mostly due to the high volume of day hikers that I saw there but also because I did a three day (two night) patrol in that area while looking for the lost radio.

Bench Contacts

249 Backpackers

0 Day hikers

14 Stock (Commercial)

Monarch Contacts

138 Backpackers

0 Day hikers

62 Stock (25 Administrative, 31 Commercial and 6 Cedar Grove used for mob/demob)

Paradise Valley Contacts

96 Backpackers (35 of these were doing Rae Lakes Loop)

144 Day hikers

8 Stock (Commercial)

Miscellaneous Contacts

42 Backpackers

17 Day hikers

0 Stock

Law Enforcement

While I am not a commissioned ranger, I still had some enforcement issues. In Paradise Valley I sent out one party without a permit while I relocated another that camped outside the designated area. At Bench I relocated two parties that were camping in a meadow near the R.S. I also had one visitor come into the Bench R.S. without a permit.

The biggest violation that I had was in the Bench area where two men were hiking part of the JMT with a dog. The Charlotte and Rae rangers had been notified of the dog and had been actively looking for them. When reports came from other visitors that the party was last seen at the Wood's Creek crossing, it was fairly apparent that they would be in my area next. I made contact with the party about ¾ mile south of the Bench R.S. The dog owner told me that they knew it was against the park regulations to have the dog, that they had been dodging rangers en-route and that they had been asking other visitors if they had seen any. They were in the park for 5 days before I caught them. I sent them out the Taboose trail, quickest way out and passed along all the pertinent information to (b) . I recommended to (b) that the dog owner get cited.

Citations

Information from the dog party as well as the party (1 person) who came to the Bench R.S. without a permit was passed along for citations as appropriate.

Search, Rescue, Medical Incidents, Fatalities

There were none of these in any of my areas!

Weather

Weather was fairly typical for summers in the high Sierras. There was frequent thunderstorm activity in the afternoon, especially in July. As in previous years, I found the Monarch Divide area to be considerably warmer than the Bench area. Days in the Monarch area were frequently quite hot, while evenings were pleasant, never cold. Bench was cold at night and breezy during the day – never knowing whether you should wear a jacket or not.

Fires

Most significant was the smoke from the Tehipite fire. Monarch did not receive much in the way of smoke; most of it in that patrol area was centered around the Dougherty drainage which did get intensely smoky about the time that I left the area. More smoke blew into Upper Basin and the Bench area as the Tehipite fire spread NE and this was surprisingly thick in the late afternoon, obscuring all but the closest peaks. On 9/14 I spotted a huge column from the Tehipite fire. It was so large that I assumed it was closer, somewhere along the Cartridge Creek drainage and so called it in to fire dispatch around 2 pm. Debbie Brenchley was hiking in over Taboose that day and also spotted it and,

while knowing it was Tehipite, called in via satellite phone because of the immense size. Earlier the Roaring River ranger also spotted it and also called it in. Later that day fire crew was sent out to check it out, and as expected, the (Tehipite) fire had experienced a big flare up. By nightfall there was only normal drifting smoke throughout the Bench area.

Backpacker Use Patterns

As expected I would see many backpackers in Paradise Valley, about half of which would be doing part of the Rae Lakes Loop.

I saw many more backpackers in the Monarch Divide area (August/Sept 2008) than I did when I was there previously in July of 2004. In part this is because August is busier, but I think it is also largely because the bugs are so terrible at Monarch in July. Most significant at Monarch was the higher number of cross country travelers that I saw this year. I do not recall many (except for Volcanic Lakes) in 2004. This year many hikers were doing a loop that came up Copper Creek trail and went to State Lakes area, cross country to Glacier Lakes and over to Grouse Lakes then returning via Copper Creek trail.

Areas around both Monarch Divide and Bench ranger stations are destinations to hit by day's end thus are busiest in the early morning and late afternoon/early evening as people leave or arrive. Mid day at both is often very quiet.

The most popular location at Bench is Lake Marjorie; the most popular location at Monarch is Granite Lake. These both seem to attract large numbers of campers and I found that patrolling either of these lakes early and later in the day netted the largest number of contacts. If I were staying in either of these two ranger station areas, I often would patrol that areas lake twice during the day.

I had far more visitors stopping into the Bench R.S. than in previous years. In part, I think it is because it is now better known that a ranger is frequently there. I handed out a lot of hungry hiker food this year as did the other three rangers who worked the station. Fewer hungry hikers stopped by in previous years.

No visitors stopped by the Monarch station. A sign marks the location, but it is somewhat far off the trail and not visible from any point along it.

Stock Use Patterns

I did not see much stock use in either Paradise Valley or at Bench R.S. I saw Cedar Grove Pack Station twice dropping off hikers either at Upper Paradise or further up Wood's Creek. I only saw one stock group at Bench – this on my way out at season's end – and this was a stock supported (Rock Creek) group of 7 hikers going from Kearsarge to Bishop.

I saw far more stock use in the Monarch Divide area. In large part this was because of trail crews working at the Granite Basin lip, Glacier Valley area and stock groups coming up from Le Conte/Simpson Meadow. I saw 3 commercial (Cedar Grove Pack Station) groups in the area. Cedar Grove Pack Station was also used to mobilize and demobilize me at the Monarch station.

Natural Resources

Bears:

I did not see nor did I hear of any bears in the Bench area this year. I did see one bear that approached me as I was cooking my dinner in lower Palisades area. I threw rocks and shouted at it and it ran off. I did a BIMS report on this bear.

I saw a few commonly seen bears in Paradise Valley but there were no negative encounters that I heard of.

I saw three bears while hiking between road's end and Lower Tent meadow. Two of these bears were commonly seen by visitors and seemed fairly unafraid of humans. I managed to get photos of both. Neither had tags or collars and I did BIMS for both.

Last year there was a problem bear at the Monarch R.S. that tore up the large canvas wall tent. I used a four person dome tent this year and did not have any problems, sightings or bear sign at the station. (I sprayed ammonia liberally around the station, about every other day, as this was said to deter bears. Unknown if this helped or not, but no problems regardless.)

Wildlife:

Numerous deer, marmots and the usual. I heard coyotes several times from Monarch and once from Bench. I spotted a large 4' long California King Snake just below Mist Falls.

I had so hoped to see a White Tailed Jack Rabbit at Bench. I've seen at least one every year that I was there. While I did not, VIP Charlie Stearns did (from Bench journal).

The best wildlife sighting that I had was on the day I left Bench (9/16). Just 3 or 4 switchbacks south of Pinchot Pass, I saw a small herd of 5 Bighorn Sheep. Rock Creek Pack Station was heading up the pass (going north) and pointed them out to me. (I believe that they saw the sheep better than I did.) I let Werner and Mazur know of the sightings and gave them further details. I believe that this is the furthest north they have been seen in the park.

Vegetation:

Most vegetation in my areas was in good condition. I was able to check all the meadows in my areas and delayed a few meadow opening dates in the Bench area.

The one area of disappointment was the amount of trampled vegetation in the Lake Marjorie basin area and near the Bench Ranger Station. I noticed increased inappropriate campsites and user trails in those areas and worked to close several of these.

Cultural Resources

Nothing to report

Backcountry Facilities

Bench Ranger Station needs a new tent and new solar batteries. Both have been ordered and should be in place by 2009. The stove pipe blew over early in the summer but was stabilized by further guy lines on the outside walls and by wiring the pipe in place on the inside. Two of the boxes at the station will be flown out by end of 2008 which will help reduce the footprint of the R.S. Debbie Brenchley hiked in to the station at the end of my stay and did a tremendous amount of work clearing out a bunch of the unneeded surplus that was filling up excess space.

The Monarch Divide Ranger Station has a new unused canvas wall tent at the station. As I had no bear problems, it seems perfectly reasonable to put it up in 2009. Everything else at the station is in good working order. The biggest drawback to the station currently is the large volume of JUNK that is there. (Really, 10-1 gallon cans of fuel, some highly rusted and ready to leak? 50 pounds of pellets?) I was able to send a small amount of the surplus out at demobilization, but it was just a fraction of what needs to go out. I really had to work to get my personal things into the small amount of space available in the boxes. If Monarch is ever to have a ranger there for the duration of the season, much more needs to come out of those boxes.

I've never been happy about the location of the Monarch Divide R.S. It is hidden from the trail and has no obvious route to it. Not one single visitor stopped by the station while I was there (except for Squad!).

The Paradise Valley cache is a nice option for rangers in the area. It would be good to get a toilet there. Not as pressing as Monarch, but there is a fair amount of unneeded surplus at this cache as well.

Signs

Bench:

Bench has a few sign needs which would be good to fulfill. All three are within the same small area.

There were four rangers that worked out of Bench this year. I believe that all four of us had at least one party that (hiking south) missed the JMT and began to take the rough trail/route towards the Muro Blanco instead. It might be good to have an unobtrusive N/S JMT sign at this point.

The South Fork of the Kings River (near Bench) has a sign that incorrectly says it is 4 miles to Mather Pass (and correctly says it is 4 miles to Pinchot). Numerous visitors have complained about this. Personally, I think this sign could be pulled altogether.

Finally, at South Fork of the Kings, I would like to see a “no campfires” sign. This has been a problem area for years. The area “looks” like it should be okay for a fire – lots of wood in a big denuded space with big logs to sit on, but in reality it is above 10,000’. Every time I go through that area, there is a new fire ring.

Monarch:

Almost every visitor, who looks for Upper Tent Meadow, misses it. A small unobtrusive campsite sign along the Copper Creek Trail would be good at this location. Just a tent symbol would be adequate.

I removed an incorrect sign at the Horseshoe Lake Junction. It would be good to get another there that gives the correct mileage, 2.7, to Horseshoe Lake.

Trails and Work Accomplished

Most of my trail work was visitor contacts and education. I spent a fair amount of time working in the Lake Marjorie basin and Granite Lake areas closing several inappropriate campsites or parallel trails in all areas.

I spent the greater part of a day working in the snow survey area on the way to Bench Lake. Later others did even more work there.

Problem Areas

Granite Basin especially has numerous parallel trails which could further be closed. Bench has one area with parallel trails, quite deep and eroded, near and across from the ranger station.

I noticed increased trampling in the Lake Marjorie Basin area. While there are ample good camping spots in the area, rangers should be on constant lookout for new or inappropriate sites popping up and work to close them. There also has been an increase in user trails in the same area or with subtle user trails becoming more distinct. I was surprised to see as much of a change as I did in only 4 years.

Granite Lake seems to be more resilient than Lake Marjorie, and despite its similar heavy use, it seems to hold up well. Still, I found several parties camped on vegetation there and had to move them to more hardened sites.

I used the trail to Paradise Valley numerous times throughout the summer and noticed that the sandy trail from road's end to the Bailey Bridge seems to be getting wider. It is the width of a road! The sand on the trail is tedious to walk in and I noticed more prints on the edge of the trail where the sand is not so deep and walking is a little easier. I strongly feel that something should be done to either delineate the trail or harden the trail in some fashion to keep it from expanding further on both sides.

Camp Areas

Conditions:

Despite some overuse issues there are many good (and appropriate) campsites available in both the Lake Marjorie area and at Granite Lake.

For Monarch I noted heavy use in Shorty's Meadow, Lower Volcanic Lakes and Lower Tent. I removed most trash and worked on numerous firerings in these areas for Monarch.

For Bench, use was mostly concentrated at Lake Marjorie, but other areas saw high use as well such as: South Fork of the Kings, Twin Lakes and at the small rise adjacent to the trail at "Ansel Adams Tarn". South Fork of the Kings was the biggest problem area but the small rise next to the Ansel Adams Tarn usually had an illegal ring at it whenever I passed through. I did not get to Wood's Lake this year.

Sanitation:

Most sanitation problems that I saw this year were in Paradise Valley. Even though there are toilets there, people use them for garbage or they are nearly unusable (Lower Tent) because of poor repair.

In contrast, I seldom see sanitation issues at Lake Marjorie or at Granite Lake. Granite Lake has an abundance of appropriate areas for visitors, but Lake Marjorie does not. For the number of visitors that stay at Marjorie, a toilet might be in order before we start to see sanitation issues there.

Fire Rings:

I removed 5 campfire rings from the Bench patrol area.

I removed 7 campfire rings from the Monarch Divide patrol area. I reduced 2 campfire rings from the Monarch Divide patrol area.

I reduced 4 campfire rings from the Paradise Valley patrol area.

Firewood Availability:

Ample in all areas but Paradise Valley especially seems a little more picked over.

Food Storage:

Almost all visitors in all areas that I patrolled had bear canisters. The only food lockers in any of my areas were at Lower Tent Meadow or the lockers in Paradise Valley. I also did a day patrol up Sphynx Creek and checked the bear locker there. All three areas had lockers with an immense amount of trash in them. The Sphynx Creek locker was the worst, entirely full, with discarded clothes and trash. The odor was quite strong and when I started to clean it out found maggots and yellow jackets throughout. I was able to carry out all surplus from both Lower Tent (of cached food) and Sphynx Creek. I saw Cedar Grove Pack Station coming through Paradise Valley and had them take out all the trash there. Unfortunately when I ended my season and came out at Paradise Valley, I noticed that several were filling up again. I took out as much as I could.

There was locker replacement at Paradise Valley this year because of old locker's poor condition.

Permit System

I had the opportunity to work the permit station this year and have a better understanding and appreciation of the hard work these people do.

Woods Creek entrance was most busy, as expected, followed by Bubbs. Trailheads are well marked, but some people had a little trouble finding the Bubbs TH. Copper Creek is also well marked with ample boxes for people to store extra food in their cars.

Issuing office did a good job but I did have to call once to ask they stop using felt tip pens. For several days I had permits that were entirely illegible because the ink ran.

Communications

The switch from analog to digital was a bit rough. Early season was especially difficult as several of the backcountry staff had to relay for others. At one point, during the Goode search, I relayed several messages from Bench. When the system was working, it worked great, and Bench reception and transmission was exceptionally good, better than I ever remember having from there. Late in the season though, it deteriorated, usually readable, but often I would have to go to one of a few spots to call out. A couple times I didn't even hear round-up even though I was listening for it. (b) (7)(F) was somewhat garbled during this later period.

The other communications issue that was confusing for me personally is when to use analog and when to use digital. During the early part of a search when one of the front country LE rangers was trying to call me (on analog), I repeatedly tried unsuccessfully to answer on digital. I had assumed that all of us, including the LE ranger, were on digital. It would be good to understand this better.

Debbie got all of us a new sky probe antenna and I found it to be excellent. At times I was unable to transmit until I put the new antenna on.

Needs for Next Year

Bench needs were all given to Debbie and I believe that most will be flown in this year. A few miscellaneous items that might not make it this year are:

- Seam sealer

- Small step ladder

- Flashlight or replacement parts (Deb took out non-working lights) – NO lights at station

Monarch needs are the same as they were in 2004 (listed here) plus a couple more items:

- Several buckets – doing laundry out of large bowls is difficult

- Rapid Washer – there was a deteriorating one in 2004, now there is none

- Water jug – one small one is okay, larger one was damaged by bear last year

- Flashlight (the one small one that is there is not working well)

- New propane hose for propane stove – the one at station is highly abraded and may not have good seal to stove

Paradise Valley needs:

- Thermarest mattress or other sleeping pad – the Thermarest there is totally flat and no longer holds air

Recommendations

Add signs at Muro Blanco, South Fork of the Kings (no campfires), Lower Tent Meadow and Horseshoe Lake Junction.

Remove sign at South Fork of the Kings (Mather Pass 4 miles)

Consider toilet for Lake Marjorie

Add toilet for Paradise Valley Ranger cache

Require fire permits for specific areas that people want campfires. This would lessen the confusion about where fires are legal.

Delineate (or even pave) the 2 miles of trail from road's end to Bailey Bridge. Its entirely too wide and getting wider as people continue to walk on the edges of the trail where the sand isn't as deep.

Have VIP training on meadow management. I tried to keep the binders up to date, but being at two stations, each only a short time, I was unable to record all the stock groups' information and grazing sites. I know that many more stock groups passed through than what I saw because I saw entries from the VIP's in the Bench journal – or – I found some old note left from a stock group somewhere. Filling in the binder is an easy thing to do; I think that the VIP's just need to be shown and reminded to do it. They do a great job and I'm sure that this is no extra burden to them.

Close down or relocate the Bench snow survey area. Many trees are growing up in that meadow which hinder the survey operations. There are plenty of meadows in the area that do not have seedlings sprouting up that could be used instead.

Pertinent Inventory

Both Monarch and Bench have all the necessary gear and equipment with the exception of what is in the "Needs" section. Both stations have a 2 person Sierra Flashlight tent, sleep pads, sleeping bag, propane and white gas stoves, ample fuel, cookware and extra emergency food.

The Bench station has been cleaned out of most unneeded gear and trash. The Monarch station desperately needs to be cleaned out as well.

-end-

PEAR LAKE END-OF-SEASON REPORT

SUMMER 2008

Ranger: Rick Sanger

Files auxiliary to this report (on computer disk turned in with report)

EOS report.doc	This document
Daily Log.doc	Daily log of activity
Inventory.doc	complete Inventory
Wildlife&Pica.doc	Wildlife observations and Pica sightings
Status.doc	Status of recommendations/projects made in past EOS reports
Pear Lake Living.doc	Tricks, insights and facilities maintenance requirements unique to pear lake patrol
Guide to Phoenix Toilets	info contained in Appendix A of this Document

A. General Summary

Station staffed from June 25 to Sept 27 (1 week front-country patrol).

Statistics:

Month	Miles	Vtr. Contacts	Citations	EMS	SAR	Fire Rings
June/July	158	485	1	2	0	14
Aug	145	364	0	1	0	15
Sept	111	166	0	0	0	0
Tot	441	1015	1	3	0	29

B. Visitor Services

Contacts

The bulk of my contacts continue to be day hikers (about 90%). I did not encounter any stock on the trail this year. Numerous occasions for visitor education, including addressing "Outward Bound" groups. Instructional presentation given to trail crew on map & compass use.

Law Enforcement

1 citation for OB camping
6 case cards for OB camping
2 case cards for abandoned property
numerous fires at Pear lake but no parties contacted

Search, Rescue, Medical incidents

Date	Location	Type	Evacuation
7/17	Pear Lk	AMS	Escort out to Wolverton
7/21	Emerald Lk	AMS	helivac
8/23	Pear Lk	Knee injury	helivac



Medivac at Pear showing splint, volunteer carriers, helicopter. Ironically, the boy watching in the upper left was helivaced out the prior month.

BLS equipment Checklist

This year an equipment checklist was prepared for the station BLS kit as well as individual patrol first aid kits. All items on this list were acquired and placed into the kits.

C. Use Patterns

No significant change seen in use patterns. I believe the current quota numbers are appropriate and working well.

D. Natural Resources

Research Equipment

Numerous research projects are active in this patrol area. In the case of Steve Sedrow's research in Emerald Lake, I made suggestions to reduce the visibility of his instrumentation which were carried out quickly.

After several seasons urging, Kevin Skeen's instrumentation at Emerald has been redecorated and is far less intrusive.

Kevin Skeen has instrumentation at Emerald and the lower Marble Fork. Last year, a letter was generated asking Kevin to reconfigure the mounts for this instrumentation that were throttling trees. This was accomplished at Emerald, but not at the Marble fork. Kevin says that the work to reduce tree throttling at the Tokapah gauging station will not occur until 2009.

Wildlife:

An unusually high number of coyote activity was observed in the Pear/Emerald Lake area this summer. This included 2 visitor observations of coyotes killing marmots at Pear Lake. They were seen individually and in groups, and there calls were heard nearly daily.

Mice, however, seemed in rather short supply at the cabin. I caught far fewer this year than last, perhaps under 20 the entire season.

Picas were seen in all the usual places (documented in previous years). No obvious decline has been observed.

Vegetation

Sylvia Haultain created a Meadow Monitoring Notebook for Pear Lake this year. This contained valuable information about park resources & regulations and I appreciated having it, even though no active residual biomass studies are present in the Pear lake Area

E. Cultural Resources

F. Backcountry Facilities

Pear Lake Ski Hut Propane System

Stories from last winter confirmed the need for a new approach to feed propane into the station. This approach decided upon was to replace flexible copper lines with standard black iron pipe. Additionally, a protective box is to be built to house the 4 tanks, and a propane alarm is to be installed in the basement.

This plan has been partially implemented. It's completion will be the responsibility of Dave Karplus. Currently there is hard line feeds from the tanks into the station with easily accessible shut-off valves. The protective box has been ordered by Chris Waldschmidt and the propane alarm is at the cabin but not installed.

Pear Lake Ski Hut Roof

The roof shingles on the east side have continued to come apart, and are now badly damaged at one point. There are a few other items, as noted in the status document (Fix loose board on ridge, re-attach guy-lines or remove, fix critter holes at ground level on west side of cabin).

A question I've posed since 2003: Is there anything the summer ranger needs to be doing to maintain the floor in the cabin?



Bulges noted in past year on the east roof have become serious damage this year.

Solar Power: Pear Lake Ski Hut

By all accounts, the remounted solar equipment is working very well. Winter users have more than adequate power for the pellet stove, lights, and in the late fall, research computers.

Phoenix Composting Toilets

It is with great disappointment that I report the ongoing degradation of the Phoenix Toilet facilities. It is unclear why this has taken such a low priority with the facilities division, but what IS clear is what is at risk: a useable facility. In an effort to clarify the situation, I have composed a “Guide to the Phoenix Toilets” (Appendix A) for rangers & maintenance that gives an overview of the system and assigns maintenance responsibilities, as I see them.

There is a strange lack of communication between those responsible for Phoenix Maintenance in the front country, and the backcountry patrol ranger. It is unclear to me why this is the case, but after six years, it is very disconcerting.

Status of Emerald Toilet Facility:

After 8 years the solar panels remain on the ground and in deplorable condition. One panel is shattered and the wires are forever being chewed by marmots. This causes low power in the system, threatens battery life, has killed one fan (it stopped so critters crawled in and chewed wires) and stopped the other fan this winter (it stopped, the hose filled with water & debris & needed a kick-start & cleaning). Soon the facility will lose power all together, it will start to smell, causing users to prop open the doors. The marmots will come in the open doors, die in the vault and we’ll be back in the same situation encountered 10 years ago...

Work Needed at Emerald Toilet:

What is needed is a new solar mount and about 100 watts of power (the two undamaged panels will work fine). The mount at Pear seems of solid design, and could be manufactured in less than 8 hours using materials in stock!!! (email sent to facilities division with pictures)

Also, hardware cloth should be installed over the ventilation stacks to prevent mice from crawling down & chewing wires. Even better, mount a cover so that when (if) the fans stop the stacks don't fill with water & snow.

Hazardous material needs to be removed from both facilities (paint cans) as well as trash.

Work Needed at Pear Lake Phoenix Facility:

A second lag bolt needs to be added to hold the mast of the solar mount in place. The single lag mount currently in use sheared off this last winter.

Supplies needed at Pear & Emerald Toilet Facilities:

Both stations are out of distilled water, as reported for the past three years. This threatens battery life, and as such, facility life. Wood chips are needed at both station at a rate of about 2 bails per season.

Heather Lake Toilet:

The current pit toilet does NOT contain sewage – winter melt creates a stream that flows into, and out of, the pit. Apparently, this has been the case for years, and there are no better sites for the toilet that have been found. Josh Gabik of the trail crew told me of toilets that can be flown into, and out of, an area. The installation of such a toilet at heather lake is the best solution I've heard of controlling excrement in the area.

Fire Extinguisher & Oxygen Pressure Tests

All fire extinguishers (approximately 6) & oxygen cylinders (4 ea) were removed from the cabin for pressure testing at the end of the season. New extinguishers & O2 cylinders were staged for transport out to the station at the time of this writing.

Foam pads at Cabin

The quality of the new foam pads purchased last year for winter users is very low. This was very disappointing. In my opinion, the old, used pads were more comfortable than the "brand new" pads now at the station.

G. Trails

Trail Work

It was great to have the Kaweah crew in the area. They accomplished a great deal, and their camp at Aster was well kept and of minimal impact.

Future trail work in the region has already been communicated to Sequoia Trails, and includes:

- Cut apart downed tree next to ranger station that is blocking visitor access to front door.
- Build stream crossing on panther gap trail to avoid continued meadow damage
- Rebuild area on Alta Trail (about ½ mile east of panther gap) where there is a muddy area followed by a very large step-up. (pictures sent to Trails)
- Install water bars near top of hump trail (pics sent to Trails)
- rebuild trail at Merhten meadows where camp use-trail has eroded integrity of main trail

Trail Signs:

A new sign has been installed at the junction of the 7-mile-trail and Alta peak trail with the feature of pointing the way to Alta Peak.

I've submitted a request to replace the shattered wooden signs on the Panther Loop ski trail. (Intersection of "Alta Trail" & Giant forest trail, Intersection of Giant Forest trail & Long Meadow Loop trail)

A "Ranger Station 1 mile" sign for Emerald was requested in 2006.

Trailhead Signs:

It has been noted in the past (see Status document) that the trailhead sign at Wolverton needs renovation. I spoke of this to Cathy Bath this year, and I hope she will take advantage of this interpretive opportunity to bring a more attractive and informative sign to the trailhead. As for my thoughts, the sign should address the issues *both* Day Users (the majority) & Backpackers – perhaps in separate spaces. Here are a few thoughts as to the most important issues from each group.

Day Users:

- 1) "Is this what you came to see?" show cigarette butts, pistachio shells, orange peels and toilet paper, & encourage people to carry these items out.
- 2) Short-cutting trails causes erosion, degrades the habitat, and is illegal
- 3) Pets are not allowed on trail

Overnight Users:

- 1) Permits are required for overnight use and are available at Lodgepole.
- 2) No fires along lakes trail (Heather, Emerald, Pear Lake)
- 3) Bear canisters and Bear boxes are the only effective food storage methods. Bear canisters are available to rent at Lodgepole for 5\$ per week

All users:

I have received many positive comments about a small note I've placed at the junction of the Hump & Watchtower trails. This note recommends the Watchtower trail to all except those "concerned" about heights and those riding stock. Such a note would also be good to include at the trailhead sign.

H. Camp Areas

Removed culvert:

With Anna Ecktar's help, we removed a culvert piece that was used for the old pit toilet at Pear Lake

**Removed Hazard Tree at Emerald Lake**

The Hazard Tree noted in previous reports at Emerald Lake was removed by Trail Crew during their stay.

I. Permit System

The trailhead staff did a great job at educating visitors. They made a good effort at keeping in touch with me as to their planned patrols, and alerted me of groups of particular concern.

J. Radio Communications

After a rough start, the radio system achieved a very high level of usefulness this summer. I was able to consistently hear paradise radio traffic at the cabin, including simulcasts. The clarity was superior to any previous years by considerable measure.

During patrol in the Pear/Emerald area, I could be fairly confident of hearing paradise repeater radio traffic. However for law enforcement contacts, I used command which I could depend on more.

K. Needs for next year

Hydrogen Peroxide (for bleach neutralization)	1 small bottle, about 24 oz
bottle of chlorine bleach	
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
20 feet of low-amperage "lamp cord" (without ends) to connect propane alarm	
Copies of any ranger logs NOT of the year 78- 80, 84 (from Ward Eldridge)	

CLIVUS/PHOENIX NEEDS:

Chips at Pear Phoenix	Need 5 bags per season. None left
Chips at Emerald Phoenix	Same. None left
distilled water for batteries	2 ea, 2.5 gallon bottles
Mount for solar panel at emerald!	1 ea
1 gallon green paint, 1 pint black paint, to repaint designated campsite markers	
about 7 carsonite posts to replace some deteriorated posts to mark designated campsites (at red fir)	

L. Recommendations

Recommendations have been made throughout this report in the appropriate sections. Tracking of recommendations made in previous years and the status of current projects is tracked in a separate document called "status.doc"

M. Pertinent Inventory:

Complete inventory in "Inventory.doc"

Appendix A

Guide to the “Phoenix” Toilets at Pear And Emerald

As told by Rick Sanger

Pear Lake Ranger 2003-2008. ver 9_25_08

Overview:

The *concept* of the toilet facilities at Pear and Emerald lake was to turn human waste to compost. They include equipment to stir the waste (add oxygen), regulate the amount of liquids (evaporators to get rid of excess) even count the number of users (sensors on doors count number openings). Users are to add wood chips to optimize the ratio of carbon & nitrogen. Fans provide negative pressure to keep the smell to a minimum.

The *reality* of these facilities is that they are merely waste bins which, at best, are well ventilated. Composting is impeded by cold ambient temperatures, poor maintenance (the rangers don't know what to do and the maintenance division seems forever absent) and sloppy installation of equipment (poorly routed wires). The consequence of this reality is minimal, since the waste (whether rich compost or raw sewage) ends up in the same place – a landfill. Perhaps the only ones that know the difference are the two or three members of the maintenance staff whose job it is to shovel out the bins.

Having said that, there is still great value in having well-ventilated waste bins at Pear & Emerald Lake and to this end, there are important maintenance procedures that must be completed regularly.

Most Important: The Ventilation Fans

The primary goal of regular maintenance is to *keep the ventilation fans running*. Once the fans stop, users prop the doors open to reduce the smell. Then the marmots get in and cause great damage, die in the waste bins, and render the facilities useless from the smell. Also, if the fans stop, the ventilation stacks collect rain & snow which fills the ventilation ducts, ruins the fans and impedes ventilation. Critters can then crawl down the ventilation stacks & chew the fan wires, etc.

Wood Chips:

Arguably, the wood chips are a waste of money. You have to buy them, fly them in, then fly them out and pay to dump them in the landfill. What difference is there in dumping high-grade compost or raw sewage? Still, I think using a couple of bails of wood chips per season at each location makes the eventual job of emptying the bins more pleasant.

Phoenix Maintenance:

RANGERS:

top off the batteries with distilled water at the beginning and end of each summer

Allow about 2 bails of chips to be added by users during each summer at each facility

report obvious damage to solar system

watch light on control panel and make sure system voltage is good (light on front of controller will flash green, according to printed chart)

Clean the interior of the vaults for the users

Store the blue, wood chip bins in the cleaning closet during the winter – they will be emptied by users within a month, then will fill with trash!

Periodically turn the compost. In the least, this prevents waste from building up on the internal mechanisms, buildup that can rise toward the user making the bins look more full than they actually are. Also, it lets you know how full the facilities are, and can stir in a little oxygen to make the job of emptying the bins slightly more pleasant.

FACILITIES STAFF:

provide distilled water

repair damage to solar system as reported by ranger

investigate low voltage reported by ranger

deliver wood chips to the facilities.

empty the bins when needed.

**Rae Lakes
End of Season Report, 2008
Ranger Dario Malengo**

General Summary

I hiked into the backcountry on June 10th to set up the Rae Lakes tent cabin, arriving on June 12th. Everything was in order and station setup only took half a day. I then completed the Rae Lakes Loop and was out of the mountains for EMT training, June 16th – 18th. On June 24th, I hiked in over Kearsarge Pass to remain in the backcountry until the end of my season, September 26th.

This season, the Rae Lakes Basin and surrounding areas saw many visitors as usual. Starting July 1st, visitation was steady and by July 20th, was heavy with as many as fifty to one hundred campers in the basin every night for the next month. Fortunately, most campers leave little or no sign of their passing and have few problems, but whenever you have large numbers of people there are those who need assistance. Some campers set up in the wrong places and need to be directed to a better location. Some have medical problems and need to be evaluated and some with personal issues may need a phone message communicated to the outside.

The ranger station is in a convenient location, allowing for easy visitor access and also allowing the ranger easy access to the camps and visitors passing through or staying overnight.

Visitor use seems to be growing over the years. There are more PCT and JMT hikers than ever, and there is a steady flow of Rae Lakes Loop hikers from Cedar Grove and just as many entering and leaving over Kearsarge Pass.

Starting July 10th, there were visitors with medical problems that needed assistance: two badly sprained knee injuries, two with respiratory problems and one with excessive fatigue and other issues.

The ranger station is minimally adequate, but it does offer enough to sustain the ranger and visitors with basic needs. The cabin is visually unattractive, lacks space and warmth, but it is in a good location for both visitor access and for the ranger to administer the needs of the area.

I did frequent patrols to the many outlying areas. They included: Dragon Lake, Sixty Lakes Basin, Baxter Lake and Baxter Pass, Woods Creek, Twin Lakes and one trip to Woods Lake and Sawmill Pass. I also patrolled the Gould and Dragon Passes and the Kearsarge and Glenn Pass Trails.

Visitor Services

Visitor Contacts and Hiking Statistics

	VISITOR CONTACTS	MILES HIKED
June	83	78
July	748	243
August	988	231
September	365	181
TOTAL	2144	733

Contacts

a. Backpackers – All but a few of my visitor contacts are with backpackers. Rae Lakes is too remote for day hikers. A few visitors camped at Kearsarge Lakes, then will day hike to Glen Pass, and one group of runners went to Rae Lakes and back to Kearsarge Lakes.

b. Day hikers – I only know of two people, both park employees, who attempted to do the Rae Lakes Loop in one day. One was a bear technician who did not make the loop and needed to borrow a sleeping bag, and the other was Eric from Roads End (b) (7) who ran the forty two mile loop.

c. Stock – No private stock users were met this season. All stock use was by commercial outfitters.

Cedar Grove pack station had two big trips in early season to Sixty Lakes Basin. They supported the “Discovery Crew” doing a documentary on frogs. John Berry and Matt were the packers. They held their stock down at Woods Creek until returning for their clients. The other trip was for the National Geographic crew, also documenting the frog situation.

Other commercial stock groups were: Rock Creek Pack Station with a trip to Sixty Lake Basin from Sawmill Pass. Reds Meadows Pack Station had one trip to Rae Lakes and out Sawmill Pass. Sequoia – Kings Pack Station with Jim packing did the JMT from Kearsarge Pass to Bishop Pass, and they also had on spot trip into Sixty Lakes Basin.

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement activities included mostly having visitors move their camp from vegetated areas to more suitable sites; I did this five times.

One illegal fire was discovered at the Sawmill JMT intersection. One fire on the isthmus happened before I arrived or late last season and burned down a White bark pine, and another early season fire at Woods Crossing escaped and burned an area of approximately 80-100 square feet.

One dog was reported to me by (b) (7), but I was not able to locate it (heard from (b) (7) that they were avoiding rangers). Visitors reported that the dog was heading north and I reported this to (b) (7) and she met them and obtained the information for a citation and made them exit the park at Taboose Pass.

a. Citations – None

Search, Rescue, Medical Incidents

DATE	LOCATION	TYPE	EVACUATION
July 10	Rae Lakes	Sprained Knee	Helicopter
July 15	Arrowhead Lake	Sprained Knee	Helicopter
July 26	Rae Lakes Station	Respiratory	Hike-a-vac to Cedar
August 8	Sixty Lakes –Rae Lakes	Respiratory - Hape	Helicopter
August 9	Rae Lakes	Excessive Fatigue	Treat and Release
August 9	Rae Lakes	Search Overdue Hiker – Found 2200 Hours	No

Fatalities – none

Weather

The only significant rain was in July. Only a small amount fell in most areas. Baxter Creek and Charlotte Lake had some locally heavy flooding. The only significant damage was to the Baxter Creek area, washing out the road, bridge and a lot of the trail. No use occurred on the Baxter Trail because of this.

Fires

The Tehipite Fire has burned for more than two months. There was not much smoke in this area until late September when this area experienced some moderate to heavy smoke for several days.

Use Patterns

- a. Backpacker - The Rae Lakes Loop hikers, Kearsarge Pass to Rae Lakes and back and the John Muir Trail hikers account for nearly 100 percent of the use. A few hikers came in Sawmill Pass and exited Kearsarge Pass.

This season there were more PCT hikers than ever. Many of them do big mileage days in early season when hiking is more difficult due to snow and high water. They are physically seasoned by the time they get this far north and have minimal medical problems.

One problem that was reported to me by (b) (6), (b) (6), Truckee, CA 96161, a veteran PCT hiker, is that the “Pacific Crest Trail Association” does not give out adequate minimum impact information with the Wilderness permits that they issue. He believes that this lack of good information is contributing to illegal fires and trash being left behind.

- b. Stock – All stock use was by commercial outfitters. The only NPS stock here this season was to pack out the Rae Lakes station at the end of the season.
- c. Commercial (See Contacts)

Natural Resources

- a. Bear Activity – This is the first season in a long time that I did not have any bear incidents reported to me. The combination of canisters and storage lockers is working well.

There were signs of bears in all areas, even up to 12,000 feet but no incidents.

The only bear incident I heard of was reported by (b) (6). Some hikers lost food in Lower Paradise Valley.

- b. Wildlife – No unusual wildlife was seen by myself or visitors. I did not see any bighorn sheep this season until September 24th when I saw five rams at Lower Rae Lakes. I saw a peregrine falcon briefly at Rae Lakes. Myself and others saw pikas six times. Bear tracks were seen above 12,000 feet near Black Mountain.
- c. Vegetation – Due to the large number of visitors at Rae Lakes, I am noticing more trampled vegetation and social paths, but I believe that it is still at an acceptable level considering how much use there is here. Increasing the use limit to two days has added to this.

Cultural Resources

- a. I am not aware of the locations of any prehistoric sites in the Rae Lakes area.

- b. Historic sites – Shorty’s Cabin on Woods Creek has almost disappeared into the ground but is still noticeable.

The sheepherders stove above the station is likely historic and remains as it’s been. Probably this flat area above the station was a frequented site for shepherds, packers and early visitors.

Facilities

- a. Ranger Station – The ranger station, as reported earlier, is in poor condition but adequate for minimal ranger operations. A visitor from New Zealand said “A bit dilapidated hey mate”. With tarps properly placed over the cabin, it keeps out the rain, but it is not good for wind or snow.
- b. Solar works fine, as does the propane and woodstove. I replaced one section of stovepipe this season.
- c. Signs – All signs are in good condition. The aluminum signs on Baxter and Sawmill Pass are in good condition, the old wood signs are also there and legible. The JMT sign at the Sixty Lakes junction that was stolen last year was replaced by a cardboard sign to hopefully keep visitors from taking the wrong trail, but still visitors made that mistake. A new JMT sign has been ordered but hasn’t arrived.

Trails

I worked the trail going into the ranger station; making it a little wider and smoother. I also drained the wet areas on the PCT below the ranger station. More work is needed to correct this wet section. More specifically, a causeway is needed with crush fill. This would be a major job because materials are a long way off. With a wheel barrow, pick mattocks and sledge hammer this could be accomplished. I also patched, with a piece of plywood, the broken rung on the bridge at Woods Crossing.

The Sixty Lakes Trail is in very poor condition (see photos). There are dangerous slick rock sections and the grade is too steep. Even the Rae Lakes side is in bad shape, in spite of all the trail crew attempts to correct the problems. Major construction would be needed to make it a good trail.

There are impacts from stock users, since it is a difficult trail to travel safely.

Camp areas

The heaviest impacted camp areas are the peninsula area of Rae Lakes and Wood Crossing. As I’ve discussed with (b) [REDACTED], the peninsula area seems to handle the heavy use, but by seasons end, looks a bit trampled. The two day limit has added to this impact. The area offers a lot of good sites, most far from water. Lower Rae Lakes offers a lot of good sites and visitor use is moderate.

Woods Crossing is a continuing problem with overcrowding. This area offers the only large number of good camping sites for many miles in any direction. The area gets especially crowded near the bear box. This year I posted a small hand written sign with directions to the toilet on the north side of Woods Creek and got amazing results. This toilet dug by the trail crew years ago, with a deep hole, had never been used. With the posted sign, this deep hole filled up in just half a season. The results were good because this season, the area was much more sanitary. I removed the sign at season’s end because the toilet is close to full.

- a. Fire rings – The only fire rings in this area are on Woods Creek. I re-conditioned all fire rings in this area many times this season, up to the last camp just below 10,000 feet. Fire rings are all dug out with a low profile. They required re-doing many times this season. There is good wood availability in all the camp areas on Wood Creek except at Woods Creek Junction. If campers walk a fair distance they can find a lot of wood here too.
- b. Food Storage – We need to indicate to visitors the proper use of bear boxes. Visitors are storing too much stuff that does not belong in them. Trash, backpacks and canisters, etc. We need to stencil the boxes again with: “Food Storage ONLY. Share with others. Leave no trash”. Also, some people think caching food is okay; we need to put this on the regulation sheet and educate permit issuers. Also, sanitation is now a problem with people putting trash in the boxes. I have been finding a lot of bags with abandoned trash and used toilet paper inside. Food and human waste together is not sanitary!

Permit System

Trailhead rangers in Cedar Grove have done a great job getting out information to visitors. Most visitors out of Cedar Grove seem aware of our regulations.

Issuing Office – the east side offices need to be worked with so we can give accurate and consistent information. There were a few problems with inconsistencies like it’s okay to cache food in lockers or the fire elevation, this season.

Communications

The digital radio system is working well in the backcountry, but not so well out of the base stations at headquarters, although, near the end of the season, communications were better. This season, with digital, the radio was able to get out better in the difficult areas on Woods Creek and at Wood Lake. The Skyprobe antennas work a little better than the regular antenna.

Needs for Next Year

- 2 boxes fire logs
- 2 propane tanks
- 2 new chairs (directors or chair with good back)
- 2 plates
- Toilet paper

Recommendations

- Have rangers and maintenance maintain pit toilet at Wood Crossing.
- Address issues with 60 Lakes trail
- Improve information and education to PCT hikers
- Improve signs on bear boxes

Inventory (See Inventory)

Inventory, Rae Lakes

- 1 Wood stove
- 1 Propane stove
- 3 Fry pans
- Miscellaneous utensils: forks, spoons, knives
- 3 cups
- 3 Oxygen cylinders (2 D's, 1 M.9)
- 2 large knaack boxes
- 2 Military storage boxes
- 2 Military flight boxes
- 2 Galvanized buckets
- 2 Solar showers
- 1 Down sleeping bag
- 1 Clip flashlight tent
- 1 Thermo Rest pad
- 1 Fire extinguisher (2003)
- 1 Pressure cooker (stainless)
- 2 Pots
- 1 Solar system
- 1 Neon light
- 1 3-burner Coleman stove
- 1 2-burner Coleman stove (cylinders)
- 1 Limbing saw
- 1 Cross cut saw
- 1 Polaski
- Several large and small plastic bags
- Several burlap bags
- 1 Coleman oven
- Miscellaneous first aid equipment
- 2 Gallons Coleman fuel
- 1 Propane tank (7.5 gallon, ½ full)
- 1 Rapid wash
- 1 folding chair (metal)
- 2 Kill your back canvas folding chairs
- 1 Foam sleeping mattress
- 3 wash tubs
- 1 shovel
- Miscellaneous tools: hammer, pliers, screwdrivers
- 1 Coleman oven
- 1 Bear canister
- 2 Crescent wrenches
- 1 Roll up table

Photos

1. Steep steps, Sixty Lakes Trail
2. Erosion, Sixty Lakes Trail
3. Deep Erosion
4. More Erosion
5. Dangerous Stock Trail
6. Shortcutting Dangerous Trail
7. Cross Country Short Cut
8. Cross Country Short Cut
9. Cross Country Short Cut
10. Cross Country Short Cut
11. More Sixty Lakes Trail
12. More Sixty Lakes Trail
13. More Sixty Lakes Trail
14. ?
15. ?
16. ?
17. Woods Creek escaped camp fire
18. Woods Creek escaped camp fire
19. Woods Creek escaped camp fire
20. Woods Creek escaped camp fire
21. Toilet Woods Creek
22. Toilet Woods Creek
23. Broken rung on bridge
24. Shorty's Cabin
25. Fire ring before rehabbing
26. After rehabbing
27. Core Plot Castle Dome Meadow
28. Core Plot, Castle Dome Meadow

**ROARING RIVER RANGER STATION
END OF SEASON REPORT
2008**

A. GENERAL SUMMARY

I was on duty at Roaring River Ranger station from 6-25-08 to 9-28-08. During the season I patrolled 655 miles of trail. I patrolled 517 miles on stock and 138 miles on foot. I contacted 826 people during the season.

B. VISITOR SERVICES

a) Contacts

- i. 405 Backpackers
- ii. 72 Day Hikers
- iii. 140 NPS & FS
- iv. 9 Hunters
- v. 20 NPS with 68 head of stock, 52 Private stock users with 93 head of stock and 128 Commercial stock users with 240 head of stock.

b) Law Enforcement

Many contacts were made concerning food storage, camping and grazing regulations.

c) Citations

No citations were written this season.

d) Search, Rescue, Medical Incidents

Date	Location	Type	Evacuation
6/21	Lost Lake	Search	Returned to Group
7/2	Cedar Grove/Roaring River	SAR.	Hiked out to Cedar Grove
8/11	Ranger Lake	Search	Returned to Group
9/5	Roaring River	Blisters	Horse evacuation
8/20	S. Side Colby Pass	Hurt Foot	Helicopter evacuation

e) Fatalities

None

f) Weather

It was a wetter spring, but most of the snow was melted from the trails, but snow held on Colby Pass until August. It was a dry summer with only a few rain storms during the summer. Many creeks were dry by the end of August and Roaring River was very low. A big storm on July 14th caused much damage to trails, the creeks rose drastically and Roaring River went up 2 to 3 feet and was all white water. My pack mules swam the creek crossings near Grand Palace Hotel meadow!!!

- g) Fires (natural, human caused not campfires)

One Lightning caused fire was allowed to burn near Avalanche Pass. It started around Aug 9th when it was 3/4 acre and at the end of Sept. it was still smoldering in the duff and was about 2 acres. Roaring River area often had smoke from the Tehipite Fire and from the Hidden Fire.

B. USE PATTERNS

- a) Backpackers: Use was scattered through the season with August being the busiest month. Most Backpackers did the Lodgepole/Elizabeth Pass Loop or Lodgepole/Colby Pass and on to Whitney. Beginners continued to hike in from Silliman Pass to Ranger, Lost or Seville Lakes or from Marvin Pass into Seville Lake.
- b) Stock: Many private groups came into the area, 4 groups were new to the area and had many questions and enjoyed the new country to explore and the beautiful views. Cedar Grove Pack Station had 2 trips into the area and Horse Corral Pack Station had many trips into Roaring River and to Seville and Lost Lakes. These trips were spread over the summer.
- c) Administrative: Trail Crew was only in for a very short time this season. There was much more work to do than they could finish in such a short time. The weed/Thistle crew was in early, and there were fire monitors studying the old Ferguson Burn and a wetland plant study-and a FS-tree study. Ned Kelleher (b) and Sylvia Haultain (b) (7) came through the area in late Sept.
- d) Commercial: Outward Bound came through the area, along with the two local pack stations.

C. NATURAL RESOURCES

- a. Bear Activity: As usual, the wild bears of the area were seen in early July and then became elusive as more visitors came into the area. A bear was seen behind the station in early July that had an orange tag in its left ear. I contacted Rachael Mazur and she said it might be a bear from Cedar Grove; the bear disappeared and was not seen again until late August when it scared a backpacker awake near the station. In Sept. it was seen west of the station near the old snow survey cabin, this time it also had a radio collar on. When Ned Kelleher saw it in late Sept. in the same location, he recognized it as a bear from Cedar Grove- KO4. I saw it in the same location on Sept 28th when I did my final ride out. I saw a mother and cub in the same area and a Blonde mother with a med. brown cub was seen near Sugarloaf throughout the summer. No problems were reported.
- b. Wildlife: Mountain lion tracks and scat were often reported through the Sugarloaf area, none were actually seen. There were fewer deer seen around the station area and no bucks in the fall. Bees!! It was a bigger bee year and they seemed desperate for salt and often came up and bit the stock and a few visitors reported stings, although no one had a severe reaction. No rattlesnakes were seen or reported this year.
- c. Vegetation: Wildflowers were great throughout the summer. Meadows opened on the scheduled dates and use was spread between all areas. Larger groups went to Ranger Meadow and Big Wet Meadow, and some smaller groups spread out between the Grave meadow, scaffold, and Austin Creek Crossing. Scaffold Meadow saw more fall use than normal, due to the Lackey fence and gate being broken down 4 times in Sept. This may have been due the K04 bear chasing or spooking horses through the wire and posts. This

caused an increase in fall use of JR pasture by Ranger stock. All Meadows were monitored in Sept. and Sylvia saw most meadows at the end of Sept. Many Ponderosas are covered with Mistletoe, they either survive it or are dead the next year.

D. CULTURAL RESOURCES

- a. Prehistoric Sites: no new sites were found, existing known sites were checked.
- b. Historic Sites: The old snow survey cabin remains about the same with no further damage. The Shorty's cabin on Moraine Ridge is also in the same condition as last year. The Shorty's cabin in Cloud Canyon had more damage to the roof this year. It had two holes in the roof shingles on the south side and one on the north side; this is 2 more than last year. The shingles were set back in place over the holes for some protection, but this roof really needs to be repaired/replaced before damage is done to the main structure. This was one of the two Shorty's cabins chosen in 1977-78 to be preserved. It needs help soon!!

I finally found the Basque Sheep Herder carvings at Screwball Meadow. They are full figure carvings and very interesting. I'm trying to get good digital photos of these and am still looking for others.

E. BACKCOUNTRY FACILITIES

- a. Ranger Station: The Solar Batteries were replaced this year. There are now 3 batteries to the system. I rebuilt the broken tool bench and the almost broken hitch rail at the station. The trail crew rebuilt the visitor hitch rail at the station. Dave Yemm came in and put flashing on the stove pipe, I later caulked it after he sent in the caulking. He repaired a hosebib in the front of the station and cleared a blockage that improved the flow to the station. He cut the corner pieces for the station that the bears like to break and claw out and I repainted as needed. This September the wooden screen door was packed in and will be painted and put up next year. I started pruning the trees around the station for fire safety and cleared about half of them; there are still a lot of limbs to cut and pine needles to clear next season. The log rail fence around the station is suffering from snow damage and will need rebuilding in the next few years. Most of the drift fences need many posts added or reset. The Lackey Pasture gate needs to be rebuilt and 10 posts added.
- b. Signs: A sign inventory will probably be done next year. Some signs need to be combined on one post at junctions and others need added wording or need to be updated to the new signs and metal posts.

F. TRAILS

- a. Agnes led the trail crew this year and she was new to the area. They had a very limited time in the area, as they had to move on to other projects. They cleared the "stoppers" but many small trees were left and about 30 "leaners" that were hazards to hikers and stock and grabbed packs. I cut out about 15 other trees as they fell during the -season. I cut the tree off the Comanche Bear Box sign, and the tree that was lying on the bear box and through the middle of the Comanche Backpacker camp. I rebuilt the 3-legged hitch rail at Sugarloaf camp. It broke last fall and they didn't rebuild it. Resource damage to trees due to stock was becoming a problem and stock and highlines were being put up too close to the main camp. Water bars were cleaned, but the big rain in August ripped through many

dirt bars that had no structure under them and many trail sections were gutted and a lot of trail tread was lost.

- b. Problem Areas: The Roaring River/Ranger Lakes areas need more time and more work from the trail crew. I probably spent 3 weeks doing trail work and this kept me from other resource projects that I planned on completing this year. (Meadow management repeat photos, etc.) Many fences need Main gate posts cut and posts added. Most trails need pruning and rock removal.

C. CAMP AREAS

- a. Conditions: Most camp areas are in good condition after summer clean up projects.
- b. Sanitation: The 2 pit-toilets near the RS in the backpacker camps were worked on this year. The trail crew put down new decking on both. The one near the RS is in fine shape, but could use a new seat. The one at the Trail Crew camp needs a riser and seat built and a back wall.
- c. Fire rings: 38 campfire pits were cleaned this season and 8 were obliterated. The worst buildup of fire rings were at Seville Lake.
- d. Firewood Availability: Good availability at all camps.
- e. Food Storage: I did not receive any "Food Storage Locker Forms" for the survey. Many people come into this area as new hikers and don't carry canisters, but rely and plan around the use of bear lockers. People have been good at storing their food and other objects, with less food and gear being left in the lockers. Many people are starting long hikes from here and are using the lockers for their overflow food and trash that won't yet fit into their canisters. A new locker (larger size) was flown into Seville Lake, which was greatly needed as this gets so much use.

H. PERMIT SYSTEM

- a. Trailheads: Most people had NPS permits from Lodgepole, Grant Grove or Cedar Grove and were well informed. Some came in from Yosemite and used the area to finish their trips.
- b. Issuing Office: Most were NPS permits and well informed. Stock groups were less informed and did not receive grazing cards or meadow specific information.

I. COMMUNICATIONS

The radio system went digital this year. It brought many challenges and changed often. Most of the season, if the repeaters were up, I could use (b) (7)(F) MR, but in Sept. it all seemed to change again and (b) (7)(F) was always scratchy and unreadable, after being clear all summer and other backcountry stations were robotic (b) (7)(F). We often relayed for each other and crippled through the season. The SAT phone was tested a few times, it is difficult to get out from the station area, but it worked well in the higher country.

J. NEEDS FOR NEXT YEAR

A second radio during July and August would be a great help. Most of the wish list items were bought this year. If the two new propane tanks were purged and filled they could go in.

The NPS stock needs to be ready to go right after ranger training is finished. They were not ready this season, even after a month and a half notice. They were over a week late and no shoes were put on; this crippled 1 horse and it was out for the season. The mules were not shod and I had to use 2 days to get this done, during a busy time, when I needed to be bringing in supplies and putting up fences and checking meadows. It is much safer for the stock if the shoes are put on a few weeks before they get heavy use- a variety of foot-related problems including hooves trimmed too short or broken pieces out of the hoof; this means more time until they can be used. Gear was missing out of my cache at Ash Mountain which I never got back or didn't get replaced- matties particularly. Charlie the mule, which replaced the above injured horse for the season, didn't have his regular pack saddle. He had an ill fitting saddle that had latigos that were too short for his size; the correct saddle was never sent out and no replacement latigos were sent. This was a headache all season and caused a few wrecks. The other stock did well this season.

K. RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Stock: see above

Conduit for the solar system (see above). I can do this project if the supplies are acquired.

Sign Inventory for next year and decisions made for improvement of some junctions.

More fence and trail work done next year throughout the Roaring River/Ranger Lake areas.

Bulletin Boards at the 3 lakes to give good NPS information.

A Longer season into mid-October would greatly help the end-of-season de-mob and much needed hunting patrols around Kanayer Gap, Rowell Meadow, and the NPS/USFS boundary.

L. PERTINENT INVENTORY

1 can Barley COB

1/3 can Alfalfa Pellets

1 1/2 large salt block(mineral) 2 small white salt blocks

Fire Extinguishers and Oxygen tanks were brought out. 4 propane tanks left at RS

1 small propane tank left at RS

Needs:

200 ft. Parachute cord

1 doz. D Batteries

2 doz. AA Batteries

6 orange firefighter notepads

3 steno note pads

Maps: 7.5 quads for Sphinx Lakes(2), Mt. Silliman(2), Mt. Brewer(1), The Sphinx(1) and maps of the S & N of these!!

1 deep wheel barrow for project work. Metal handles and solid tire 1 gallon Anti Freeze for station shut down

130 ft. of plastic conduit, needed parts and glue to put in permanent buried solar lines to panel area on the big rock west of R.S.

Stock Needs:

6 bags of Dry Cob Barley

6 bags of Alfalfa Pellets 2 tubes Banamine

4 new matties(larger size)

4 horse snaps for lead ropes 2 small mineral blocks

End of Season Report

Rock Creek Ranger Station
June 23-September 26, 2008
Alison Steiner



Bighorn Sheep on the Slopes of Mt. Langley

A. Visitor Services

a. Contacts

- i. Backpackers/Day Hikers...approximately 2000
- ii. Stock:
 1. Total Animals/Total Use Nights...188/337
 2. Horses/Mules...176
 3. Burrows...6
 4. Llamas...6
 5. Commercial...159
 6. Private...6
 7. Administrative...29

b. Law Enforcement/Citations:

Two citations were issued for violations in the Rock Creek area this summer—the first to an oversized group camping in the Miter Basin, the second to a university group with neither a commercial-use permit nor a wilderness permit. [Please see “Permit System: Compliance” for more on commercial groups operating within the park without proper authorization.] As always, education proved the most effective means by which to handle law enforcement situations.

c. SARs and Medicals:

Date:	Location:	Type:	Evacuation:
6/29	Mt. Langley	SAR: 72 yr. old man separated from party while attempting Langley as a day hike	Resolved without significant NPS intervention
7/17	Rock Creek Ranger Station	Medical: 43 yr. old woman with significant swelling of left arm, history of lymph edema	Stock (Cottonwood Pack Station)
7/29	½ mile N. of Rock Creek Crossing on PCT	Medical: 16 yr. old boy having seizures (5 total), no history of seizures	Helicopter, ALS
8/1	Sky Blue Lake, Miter Basin	Medical: 20 yr. old female with sore hip (reported as dislocated)	Helicopter, ALS

d. Fatalities:

There were no fatalities in the Rock Creek area this summer.

e. Weather:

Compared to last year, this was a wet summer. Although a dry,

warm spring resulted in little snow early season, several weeks of heavy rain in July kept the creeks running and the meadows green. A storm on September 10th dusted the district's peaks with the season's first snow.

f. Fires:

Numerous fires (most outside of the park) produced smoke that clouded the district in early July. Thankfully, air quality improved by mid-July, and days were generally clear and smoke-free during peak hiking season.

On July 17th, lightening struck a foxtail pine on the Siberian Outpost and started a single-tree fire. Located in an area with negligible underbrush, the fire failed to spread and was out in a matter of days.



Siberian Outpost Fire (7/18)

B. Use Patterns

a. Backpackers/Dayhikers:

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 10-50 people attempt to summit the peak each day). As has been recommended in the past, a cairned route up Langley would greatly reduce resource damage to this fragile alpine area. [Please see "Trails: Problem Areas" for a more detailed description of use patterns/resource damage on Mt. Langley.]

b. Stock:

There was a slight increase in overnight stock use in the district this season. Whereas Lower Rock Creek saw fewer than 100 nights of use last year, it received approximately 200 this summer. I attribute this increase, in part, to the trail crew's more lengthy stay in the area (12 nights as compared to 3 in 2007). In addition, Rock Creek and Frontier Pack Station led several large trips through the district, staying at either Nathan's Meadow or Lower Rock Creek. Cottonwood Pack Station continued to run frequent spot trips into Upper Rock Creek.

The only known private stock use in the area consisted of a hiking party accompanied by six llamas.

c. Administrative:

Rock Creek received considerable administrative use this year, the majority occurring between early August and early September. On August 13th, Sylvia Haultain, Erik Frenzel, and two volunteers began species composition in Lower Rock Creek. They completed this monitoring project on August 18th. In early September, the military trip passed through Rock Creek, staying at Lower Rock Creek Crossing on the 1st and the All-Expense Camp at Rock Creek Lake on the 4th.

The most interesting administrative group in the Rock Creek area this summer was the Sequoia Foundation's Artists-in-the-Backcountry trip. Foundation staff and several well-known artists (13 total) arrived on August 2nd and departed on August 9th. Like last year, they used the Army Creek junction as a base camp from which to explore the Miter Basin, the Siberian Outpost, and Lower Rock Creek. The Foundation's efforts to reduce its impact in the Army Creek area (all food was stored in bear-proof barrels and scrim was used in the kitchen and along the path to water) were greatly appreciated.

After lengthy discussion about the future of the Foundation's program (staff will be applying this year for grants to provide permanent support for the trip), the organizers—Armando Quintero and Bill Tweed—expressed interest in using this trip not only as an artist retreat, but also as a model to promote Leave-No-Trace techniques. At their request, I have compiled a list of recommendations as to how they might meet this goal. This list should be sent to Armando as soon as possible so that he can use it in upcoming funding requests. His email address is: aquintero3@ucmerced.edu.

Recommendations for Leave-No-Trace Camp:

1. Lay scrim over any vegetated surface that receives consistent traffic (i.e. dishing washing station, kitchen, path to toilet, path to shower, sitting area, path to water).
2. If using the Army Creek site, assess various options for paths to water and choose the option with the least potential for resource damage (i.e. trampled/uprooted vegetation, erosion, etc.)
3. Move the camp to a previously impacted site.
4. Be extremely aware of where packers tie stock during mobilization and demobilization. Avoid tying to small trees or trees in vegetated areas. Choose rocky areas with little to no vegetation.
5. During demobilization, carry gear to one central location so that stock do not need to walk through camp or across creek.
6. If camping in an area where fires are permitted, use a fire blanket rather than a fire pit.

7. Use an ammo can for human waste and pack it out at the end of the trip.
8. Setup the dish washing station on a durable surface, rather than on dryland vegetation.
9. Dig a sump at least 100 feet away from water and in an area without vegetation.
10. Build Leave-No-Trace discussions into group meetings before the trip. Make sure that all artists understand Leave-No-Trace philosophy.

d. Commercial:

Groups from Cottonwood Pack Station and Rock Creek Pack Station comprised the majority of the district's commercial stock use. Frontier Pack Station and Three Corner Round also ran trips in the area.

I met several commercial or special-use hiking parties this summer as well. Mt. Travel Sobek, Southern Yosemite Mt. Guides, Sierra Mt. Center, the Sierra Club Outing Department, and Call of the Wild were the five organizations that had valid commercial-use authorizations. The groups that I contacted from Point Loma University, The Thatcher School, and Outward Bound, Los Angeles did not have commercial or special-use permits. [Please see "Permit: Compliance" for more on commercial groups operating within the park without authorization.]

e. Aircraft:

Although military over-flights were common along many of the districts trail corridors and cross-country routes, low flying military aircraft were not. I reported no low fliers this summer. 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

a. Bear Activity:

Bears were present, but not particularly problematic, in the Rock Creek area this summer. Although bear scat was found near the ranger station in early September, no visitors reported bear activity in the district's campsites. I attribute the reduction in bear reports to visitors' overwhelming compliance with the area's bear canister requirement.

b. Wildlife:

The most interesting wildlife observations this summer involved bighorn sheep. On July 5th, I watched four bighorn graze the western slope of the Major General for over two hours. Beginning in early August, observations became more frequent, with both visitors and park service employees reporting (almost daily) sightings of up to 35 sheep (all in the vicinity of Mt. Langley and Upper Soldier Lake).

The most significant change in wildlife observations involved bobcats, or lack thereof. Whereas several bobcats were spotted in the district last summer, there were no sightings in Rock Creek this year.

c. Vegetation:

Although this qualified as a “dry” year, meadows remained wet early season and green throughout the summer. The opening dates for Rock Creek Lake and Penned-Up Meadow were delayed several weeks, and stock parties were encouraged in early July to graze the south side of the Lower Rock Creek Meadows rather than the marshier northern side. All area meadows looked healthy and minimally impacted in mid-September.

(b) (3) (A) and (b) (3) (B) found exotic plants in the All-Expense Camp’s tie-up area in late June. I recommend that this area continue to be monitored for invasive species.

D. Cultural Resources:

a. Prehistoric Sites:

I visited the (b) (3) (A), (b) (3) (B) several times throughout the summer in order to monitor activity (b) (3) (A) and I encountered two individuals presumably looting the site last year). Although there has been foot traffic in the area, nothing appears significantly disturbed.

I also found a new site between Rock Creek Lake and Rock Creek Meadow #2. It consists of numerous obsidian flakes, an intact point, and possibly a pestle. The site also contains a large and seemingly new fire ring. I withheld from removing the fire ring for fear of disturbing the area. Next year’s Rock Creek ranger should consult with the park’s archeologist about how to handle this situation.

b. Historic Sites:

The only historic site in the district is the ranger station itself (built in 1949 by the Department of Water Resources). It remains in good condition.

E. Backcountry Facilities:

a. Ranger Station:

Thankfully, the ranger station over-wintered well. The metal plate that Thor created last September to cover the station’s new door seems to have solved the problem of winter break-ins. However, a more substantial lock is still needed so as to insure security.

Thor returned early this season to weather-proof the new door as well as to install a small window. He also repaired the station’s screen door, which had been ripped by a bear last summer. Although functional, I recommend replacing the screen door as soon as possible.

Other station maintenance included building a new porch step (completed by the Kern trail crew) and mouse-proofing the cabin by nailing twine around the attic (completed with the help of (b) (5)).

The solar system remains in good condition, but the batteries (which were installed in 2002) should be replaced next year.

b. Signs:

The sign at the PCT/Rock Creek junction was defaced this summer (“UR Mom” and “PCT →” were scratched into the metal). All other area signs remain in good condition.

c. Other Facilities:

The stock demonstration camp’s highline was setup on June 25th and the Rock Creek drift fence on June 26th. These were taken down on September 6th and September 18th, 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

a. Trail Activities (work accomplished):

The Kern Crew spent August 27th through September 6th in the Rock Creek area. During that time, they cleaned waterbars on all of the district’s trails, removed two large boulders from the switchbacks above Lower Rock Creek Crossing, and cut-out a tree ½ mile southeast of the ranger station. They also replaced the station’s front step and chopped the snow survey wood. Unfortunately, the log crossing at Nathan’s Meadow was not repaired, leaving visitors to create use trails as they look for alternate crossings downstream.

On July 13th, I cut-out a tree ¼ mile south of the ranger station in order to open the PCT to stock traffic.



b. Problem Areas (prioritized):

Use-trails on Mt. Langley pose the most significant problem in the Rock Creek area. According to the summit register, more than 1,000 people attempt to climb Langley each summer. During peak season, it is common to contact 50+ people a day on the mountain. Langley's popularity can be attributed to its height (over 14,000 ft.), to the ease of the climb (class 1-2 if you find the right route), and to the fact that it is not subject to a strict permit system like Mt. Whitney.

Because there is no official trail to the summit of this popular peak, hikers tend to choose their own route—a tendency that has resulted in hundreds of use trails. [Please refer to the maps at the end of this report for more specific information on the location and abundance of these trails.] These use-trails pose both resource damage and visitor safety concerns. Wandering hikers trample vegetation that is vital to the peak's bighorn sheep population. Additionally, use-trails often lead inexperienced hikers to routes that are far too difficult.

The problem of Langley's use-trails has two obvious solutions. The first involves collaboration between Sequoia National Park and Inyo National Forest to reduce the daily trailhead quota for the Cottonwood Lakes area. According to the summit register that I placed on Langley this summer (in which I asked hikers to specify whether they were day-hiking or backpacking), the vast majority of climbers attempt the peak as a day hike from the Cottonwood Lakes basin or Long Lake, not from the trailhead. Thus, limiting the overnight permits available for this area would most likely decrease the number of both climbers and use-trails. The second solution involves the Rock Creek ranger and the trail crew cairning an official route to the mountain's summit. This would consolidate use to one trail corridor, reducing resource damage as well as visitor safety issues. I believe this would take the trail crew 3-5 working days.

Other problem areas in the district include the half-mile section of trail between Rock Creek Lake and Lower Soldier Lake, the Army Creek Crossing, and the switchbacks directly north of Lower Rock Creek Crossing. Because the Kern Crew visits Rock Creek at the end of the season, these spots suffer from a lack of basic maintenance (a situation that is particularly problematic given the amount of foot and stock traffic in the area).

G. Camp Areas

a. 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 summer due to frequent patrols.

A significant increase in use was noticed at Lower Soldier Lake

this season. In August, it was common to see as many as 40 people camped around the lake each night. I attribute this change, in part, to Tom Stienstra's 8-part series on Sequoia National Park, which appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle last summer. In his article, Stienstra lauds Lower Soldier Lake as one of the nicest campsites in the southern sierra. I contacted several parties that mentioned planning their trip according to his recommendations. I suggest that next year's ranger monitor use at Lower Soldier, paying particular attention to resource damage related to increased visitation.

b. Sanitation:

Due to amount of traffic within the district, sanitation is becoming an issue of increasing concern. Significant quantities of toilet paper and human feces were found in the campsites throughout Lower Rock Creek, in particular. Although permit issuing offices ask visitors to pack out used toilet paper, hikers continue to barely bury it (if they bury it at all). Many visitors simply don't understand why they need to—or how they're supposed to—pack out their toilet paper. One hiker, disturbed by the amount of used toilet paper in and around the district's campsites, suggested that issuing offices give hikers an opaque ziplock "toilet paper" bag (with "Toilet Paper—Pack It Out" stamped on the front) when they pick up their permit. This would allow trailhead rangers to discuss sanitation concerns in greater detail with visitors, as well as provide a concrete way for visitors to comply with the park's minimum impact regulations. I believe that this has the potential to greatly reduce the amount of toilet paper left in the backcountry.

c. 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 at Rock Creek Lake (before/after; reduced on 9/8)

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 in Lower Rock Creek (before/after; removed 8/31)



Illegal Fire Ring at Guyot Creek (before/after; removed July 2008)

d. Fire Regulations:

Undoubtedly, the elevational fire limit in Sequoia National Park is too high. There are few trees at 11,200 feet, and those that do grow at this elevation tend to be foxtail pines. This leaves little protection for the park's foxtail pine forest and its remnant down-wood resource. In addition, Sequoia's twelve campfire exceptions confuse visitors and contribute to the establishment of illegal fire rings. Lowering the fire line would remedy both of these situations.

That said, the recommendation to lower the fire line to 10,000 feet poses several problems. If campfires are banned above 10,000 feet primarily to protect the foxtail pine forests, it seems absolutely essential that the majority of campsites above the fire line actually contain foxtails. The 2007 Vegetation Map for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks suggest 80% of the park's foxtails are located above 10,000 feet. However, many camps above 10,000 feet contain few, if any, foxtails. In Rock Creek, for example, foxtail pines are difficult to find even in camps as high as 10,500 feet. [For more information on campsite vegetation, please refer to the chart below or consult the 2006/2007 campsite inventory.]

Therefore, limited firewood availability rather than the presence of foxtail pines should drive the creation of a 10,000 foot fire line (at least in this area). Alternately, if the park wants to cite foxtails as cause to lower the fire line, the 10,000 foot recommendation should be amended. I suspect that most backpackers will follow whatever regulation the park

creates. However, compliance is much more easily gained when regulations and reality correspond. I also predict a shift in stock-use should this recommendation become a formal restriction (something to be seriously considered by the park's meadow managers). Lastly, I strongly recommend that the park not create new exceptions where fires would be allowed above 10,000 feet—should this become the new fire line—because this would directly contradict the attempt to simplify fire regulations in the park.

Location:	Current Fire Status:	Elevation:	Vegetation:
Lower Rock Creek Crossing	Fires Allowed	9600 ft.	Lodgepole
Rock Creek Ranger Station Campsite	Fires Allowed	9700 ft.	Lodgepole
Rock Creek Ranger Station	Fires Allowed	9700 ft.	Lodgepole
Nathan's Meadow	Fires Allowed	10,000 ft.	Lodgepole
Rock Creek Lake (Main Camp)	Fires Allowed	10,400 ft.	Lodgepole/ Foxtail
Rock Creek Lake (bluff camp)	Fires Allowed	10, 500 ft.	Lodgepole/ Foxtail
Rock Creek Lake (corner camp)	Fires Allowed	10, 500 ft.	Lodgepole/ Foxtail
Rock Creek Lake (All-Expense Camp)	Fires Allowed	10, 500 ft.	Lodgepole
Camp Below Lower Soldier Lake	Fires Allowed	10, 700 ft.	Lodgepole
Lower Soldier Lake	No Fires	10, 800 ft.	Lodgepole/ Foxtail
Army Creek Crossing	Fires Allowed	10,800 ft.	Lodgepole/ Foxtail
Penned-Up Meadow	Fires Allowed	10, 700 ft.	???

e. Food Storage:

As mentioned earlier, nearly everyone I encountered this season was carrying a bear proof canister. As a result, there were no reports of bear activity in area campgrounds.

H. Permit System:

a. Compliance:

Permit compliance was extraordinarily high this summer. Every private party that I met had a valid wilderness permit. In addition, almost all commercial groups had their wilderness permits and commercial-use authorization forms readily accessible for ranger checks.

However, I did contact three commercial and/or special-use groups

(from Point Loma University, Outward Bound, Los Angeles, and The Thatcher School) that did not have the appropriate permits. Surprisingly, these organizations had obtained special-use permits through Inyo National Forest. I recommend that the park be proactive in identifying and contacting commercial and/or special-use groups prior to their entering the wilderness (by either collaborating with Inyo National Forest or searching the internet for advertised trips), so as to reduce illegal activity in the backcountry. It is also essential that the fine for operating without commercial-use authorization exceeds the cost of said permit.

b. Issuing Office:

The issuing offices did a great job this summer. Visitors were generally well-versed in, and willing to comply with, park regulations.

My only recommendation is that the park coordinate with Inyo National Forest regarding wag-bag regulations. East-side Whitney rangers supposedly require all hikers (including JMT north) to carry and use wag-bags. Because there are no disposal facilities on the west side of Whitney, issuing offices continue to suggest that park-bound individuals bury the contents of their used wag-bags upon descent to Crabtree. These bags include chemicals that should not be dumped in the park; it therefore seems more reasonable for Inyo National Forest to allow a wag-bag exception for those few hikers beginning the JMT via the Whitney trail.

I. Communications:

Radio communication is generally better in Rock Creek than elsewhere in the Kern because the (b) (7)(F) repeater is located in (b) (7)(F) of the district. However, transmission/reception in the (b) (7)(F) is still spotty at best. In addition, the switch to narrow-band/digital last summer reduced radio reliability throughout the backcountry, including in the Rock Creek area. Until late-July, frontcountry/backcountry communication often broke down entirely (sometimes for days at a time), leaving rangers to rely on complicated relays. (For example, Kern rangers would call out-of-service to (b) (7) on (b) (7)(F), (b) (7)(F) would call (b) (7)(F), (b) (7) would call Dispatch on (b) (7), and Dispatch would call (b) (7)(F).) This breakdown in communication proved problematic during two of Rock Creek's medicals. On July 17th, the evacuation of a woman with lymph edema was delayed 1½ hour while I tried to contact either Dispatch or (b) (7)(F) (which was currently down). (b) (7)(F) attempted to relay via satellite phone, but this also failed. On July 29th, Helicopter (b) (7)(F) was unable to communicate with Fire Dispatch when it had to land unexpectedly during the evacuation of a seizure patient.

Although rangers in the Kern now use SPOT devices and satellite phones for daily check-ins and/or during medicals when necessary, these various technologies do not by any means replace reliable radio coverage. Because visitor and employee safety is at stake, improving radio communication in the backcountry should be a priority for the park. Waypoint data has been collected

and submitted to Pat Lineback in order to help produce a new communication reliability map from which the park can begin this important radio work.

J. Needs for Next Year:

Fuel:

3-4 small propane tanks

Maps:

2 Johnson Peak (7.5 min)

1 Kern Peak (7.5 min)

1 Tails Illustrated SEKI

Medical:

7 SAR brochures

10 pair gloves

10 triple antibiotic ointment

10 acetaminophen

20 ibuprofen

Other:

1 face mask (for cleaning station early season)

2 rolls duct tape

2 sponges

10 rolls toilet paper

1 thick roll strapping tape

1 thin roll strapping tape

4 pocket notepads

2 bundles paper towels

3 boxes matches

24 AAA batteries

2 cans each brown and white lacquer

8-10 C-batteries for trail counter

10 visitor contact log sheets

10 holey envelopes

15 burlap sacks

1 pencil sharpener

1 large carabineer (for highline)

8 sheets laminating paper

5 “flammable” stickers

5 tall candles

5 exotic plant observation forms

K. Recommendations

- a. Problem: Resource damage caused by the Sequoia Foundation’s Artist-in the Backcountry trip.

- Solution: Forward Leave-No-Trace recommendations to trip organizer so that the Foundation can find funding for the materials needed to reduce impact.
- b. Problem: Presence of invasive plants at Rock Creek Lake All-Expense Camp.
Solution: Have (b) (7) continue to monitor this area for invasive species.
- c. Problem: Ranger station needs a new lock in order to insure cabin security.
Solution: Have Thor visit Rock Creek early next season and replace existing lock.
- d. Problem: Storm destroyed the log bridge across Rock Creek at Nathan's Meadow in 2006. Use-trails have appeared throughout the meadow as a result of people searching for alternative crossings.
Solution: Have Kern Crew replace bridge in 2009.
- e. Problem: Hundreds of use-trails on Mt. Langley threaten bighorn sheep habitat and pose visitor safety concerns.
Solution: Collaborate with Inyo National Forest to reduce the Cottonwood Lakes Trailhead quota and work with trail crew to cairn an official route to the summit.
- f. Problem: Trail crew visits Rock Creek at the end of the season, resulting in a lack of basic maintenance of area trails.
Solution: Have trail crew visit Rock Creek earlier in the season so that trail maintenance projects in other areas of the park don't cut into time spent in Rock Creek.
- g. Problem: Toilet paper plumes left in popular campsites.
Solution: Hand out opaque bags labeled "Toilet Paper: Pack It Out" at permit issuing offices.
- h. Problem: Commercial and/or special-use groups operating within the park without proper authorization.
Solution: Identifying and contacting these groups prior to entrance into the backcountry by collaborating with Inyo National Forest as well as conducting internet searches for trip advertisements during the winter.
- i. Problem: East-side permit issuing offices advise park-bound Whitney hikers to empty the contents of their used wagbags upon descent to Crabtree.
Solution: Coordinate with Inyo National Forest so as to officially exclude park-bound Whitney hikers from wagbag requirements.
- j. Problem: Decrease in radio communication throughout the backcountry after switching to narrow-band/digital.
Solution: ???
- k. Problem: Lack of funding for ranger stations in the Kern sub-district.
Solution: Allocate additional backcountry funding so that all stations are staffed with a paid ranger.

L. Pertinent Inventory:

Fuel:

2 (full) and 2 (½ full) 8-oz. pocket rocket canisters
2 (full) and 2 (½ full) 4-oz. pocket rocket canisters
1 (full) 16-oz. pocket rocket canister
8 gallons of white gas
1 quart of ethanol
1 quart of lighter fluid
1 large propane tank
½ small propane tank
3 canisters Coleman stove gas

Maps:

2 Mineral King (7.5 min)	3 Mt. Whitney (7.5 min)
3 Mt. Langley (7.5 min)	1 Mt. Williamson (7.5 min)
1 Kern Lake (7.5 min)	2 Cirque Peak (7.5 min)
0 Kern Peak (7.5 min)	1 Triple Divide (7.5 min)
2 Mt. Brewer (7.5 min)	1 Kearsage Peak (7.5 min)
1 Johnson Peak (7.5 min)	1 John Muir Wilderness and SEKI
1 Mt. Whitney (Harrison)	0 Trails Illustrated SEKI
3 Chagoopa Falls (7.5 min)	1 Lone Pine (15 min)
1 Golden Trout Wilderness	2 Kern Peak (15 min)
3 Mt. Kaweah (7.5 min)	2 Mt. Whitney (15 min)

Cabin Supplies:

1 can enamel finish	4 new mousetraps
¼ 8-oz. can spar urethane	1 box matches
35 quart-size ziplocks	2 notepads
25 sandwich bags	30 AA batteries
14 lightsticks (for SARs)	2 black logbook
3 bundles paper towels	2 new dishtowels
5 rolls toilet paper	50 ounces laundry detergent
2½ bottles dish soap	1 roll duct tape
12 D batteries (expiration 10-2006)	2 rolls thin strapping tape
35 clothespins	2 new sponges
50 feet aluminum foil	2 packages kleenex
1 lost/found report book	20 CUA forms
1 employee medical evaluation packet	8 visitor contact log sheets
2 exotic plant observation forms	3 grain sacks
50 wildlife observation forms	20 large trash bags
20 BIMS forms	~50 small trash bags
0 burlap sacks	1 shovel head
12 sheets laminating paper	4 bottles insect repellent
20 2008 minimum impact sheets	1 bag p-cord
5 cutter insect repellent sticks	4 bottles sunscreen
	1 “flammable” sticker

5 binder clips
1 box thumbtacks
1 voltmeter
1 slingshot
1 laundry brush

1 bag cotton balls
1 rubber radio antenna
2 patch kits
2 jars contact cement
4 pairs earplugs

First Aid Supplies (ALS):

2 lactated ringer's injection USP 1000ml (exp. 9/08 and 4/09)
7 nu gauze (2x2, 4-ply)
lots of alcohol pads
1 IV start kit with dermaframe transparent dressing (exp. 5/09)
1 primary IV set
1 smallbore T-port extension set (exp. 9/2011)
1 sharps shuttle
1 sodium chloride-2ml, .9% (exp. 11/09)
2 18G, 1¼" protect IV (exp. 05/08 and 11/09)
1 20G, 1¼" protect IV (exp. 4/2010)
1 roll tape

First Aid Supplies (BLS):

17 run sheets
10 follow-up instruction forms
3 SAR brochures
27 knuckle bandages
3 eye bandages
2 splinter out kits
20 steri strips
50 butterfly closures
1 readisplint-full arm
20 3x4 in. sterile pads
11 4x30" scotchcast 2 splint
30 3x3" sterile gauze
20 alcohol pads
3 povidone-iodine pads
1 pediatric non-rebreather
1 4x15" scotchcast 2 splint
Lost of expired meds
3 adult non-rebreather
9 acetaminophen
9 aspirin
3 sam splints

Lots of moleskin
3 nasal cannulas
1 2"x5 yard gauze roll
2 4½"x4½ yard gauze roll
20 4x4" gauze pads
10 emergency sunglasses
3 pair little gloves
4 pair big gloves
5 triple antibiotic ointment
25 2x3" gauze pads
15 2x2" gauze pads 5 sterile q-tips
1 bottle Caladryl
1 pupil gauge
8 rolls athletic tape (various sizes)
100 bandaids
1 CPR microshield
1 oxygen regulator
2 c-spine collars
1 cardboard splint
3 menstrual pads

First Aid Supplies (Ready Bag):

1 adult non-rebreather
1 adult nasal cannula
2 clif bars

2 emergen-C drinks
Small bag Gatorade
1 CPR mask

1 air splint
1 c-collar
1 multi-trauma dressing
1 stethoscope
1 blood pressure cuff
1 sam splint
1 bag valve mask
1 cold compress
2 pair gloves

1 pen
2 rolls athletic tape
2 runsheets
various gauze pads
assorted medications
1 syringe
1 pair trauma shears
1 thermometer
1 oxygen regulator

Oxygen:

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

A. General Summary

This was my 17th summer working as a seasonal wilderness ranger at SEKI. It was a typically busy summer for visitation, though incidents were down in the area. The Crabtree patrol area has a steady flow of visitors from July to October. The focal point for most travelers to the area is Mt. Whitney.



I arrived at Crabtree on June 21st after 2.5 weeks of training in the front country. Evidence of another dry winter was observed on my patrol over Trail Crest. I encountered a small patch of snow near the summit of Mt. Whitney, otherwise the trail was snow free from Whitney Portal to Crabtree. There was evidence of many visitors in the area prior to my arrival. The first 3 weeks saw a steady stream of PCT thru hikers heading for Canada. The patrol cabin was in good condition upon my arrival and the snow surveyors continue to take good care of the cabin during the winter.

B. Visitor Services

Visitor services are a primary duty of the Crabtree ranger. The high volume of visitors to the area each summer results in many contacts and much time is spent answering questions, giving directions, and educating visitors new to the wilderness on how to travel using minimum impact techniques.

a. Contacts

i. Backpacker - 2,212

ii. Day hiker - 1,400

iii. Stock - 220

iv. Crabtree Trail Counter - (total for 6/25-9/25) = 3,378 (see appendix).



Mt. Whitney summit crowd

b. Law Enforcement - A seasonal law enforcement commission is an important tool for the Crabtree ranger to have in the tool box. I use it daily while on patrol. Education of park visitors continues to be my focus to gain compliance with NPS regulations.



Dog turned back at park boundary.



Abandoned gear/trash from Guitar Lake.

Violations observed in the area this summer included; illegal fires, abandoned property and trash, group size violations, and sanitation issues. Often the ranger observes such activities after the fact and has no recourse but to clean up the mess.

c. Citations - Group size violation (3), Littering, Sanitation, and Failure to have the appropriate permit to operate commercially.

d. Search, Rescue, Medical incidents - Incidents were down in the Crabtree patrol area this summer. There were no searches that lasted longer than a few hours (misplaced hikers). I was involved in 1 incident on Mt. Whitney while on a day patrol. A visitor approached me and stated that his climbing partner was stranded on a ledge near the Mountaineers Route and unable to go up or down. We were only able to establish voice contact with the stranded person and he was requesting help in the form of a climbing harness and a rope. I did not have the gear with me to help, but I was able to find a climbing party who had just summited via the East Face and had a rope and were willing to assist. We were able to access and bring the stranded climber up to the summit plateau.

There were numerous visitors at the ranger station looking for medical advice and minor medical supplies. There was only 1 medivac from Crabtree this summer. A 60

year old man was evacuated after complaining about chest pain and shortness of breath. Prior to my arrival at Crabtree a party of 2 was evacuated from the summit of Mt. Whitney by Helicopter (b) after dialing 911. The reporting party stated that his partner was suffering from altitude illness and could not make it off the mountain by herself. They then spent a cold night in the summit hut before being evacuated in the morning. This dangerous landing by (b) could have been avoided had the ranger been in the field at the time and the party had used the cell phone that they had used to dial 911 to check their messages or call back for further instructions. As it was they had no plan to self evacuate and were found on the summit, cold and tired, and simply waiting for help to arrive (as if they had called for a taxi!!).

I responded to several incidents in the Tyndall patrol area due to the fact that the Tyndall station was not staffed this summer. The first incident occurred on July 13th at Wright Creek. Dispatch called me at Crabtree at 2030 hrs and stated that they had received a report via satellite phone that there was a 52 year old male at Wright Creek who was exhibiting signs of a stroke. Under the direction of Supervisory ranger Erika Jostad I packed medical supplies from Crabtree and headed to Wright Creek. I was fortunate to have a visiting state snow surveyor, John Ditli, with me at the time and he volunteered to assist and helped to carry supplies to the scene. It was also very fortunate that the trail crew (camped at Tyndall Creek) was also monitoring their radio and volunteered to carry supplies from the Tyndall station and meet me at Wright Creek. We spent the night in the rain at Wright Creek until Helicopter (b) arrived in the morning to evacuate the patient. The patient was indeed showing signs of having suffered a stroke, had right side paralysis and was unable to communicate.

On August 1st while on patrol in the Tyndall area I was approached by a visitor who stated that his hiking partner was ill and had been vomiting violently since early that morning. I hiked with him to the scene just below Lake South America. The patient was very ill, had been vomiting blood, and stated that his airway felt like it was closing. He stated that he had vomited at least 30 times since that morning and that he had suffered a similar episode a year ago that resulted in 7 days in the ICU. The patient was flown out as a stat medical and park medic Erika Jostad provided advanced care.

The Kern trail crew responded to a medical at Wallace Creek while I was on patrol in the Rock Creek area. The patient was a 20 year old male suffering from dehydration and altitude illness. Adam Tearnly of the trail crew spent the night monitoring the patient and initiated the medivac via dispatch. Helicopter (b) evacuated the patient the following morning. This incident is one of many that the trail crew has assisted with over the years. They are an invaluable resource to wilderness rangers.

e. Fatalities - There were no fatalities in the area during the summer field season.

f. Weather - It was a dry summer in the southern Sierra. We had a period of rain in late July that brought flooding to the Owens Valley but only about an inch of rain to the southern Sierra around Crabtree. Temperatures were near normal most of the summer.

g. Fires - There were no wildfires in the Crabtree area this summer. Smoke from numerous fires in California, notably the fires near Kennedy Meadow and in the Los Padres NF, obscured the skies for the last week of June and early July. The Tehipiti fire

put some smoke in the upper reaches of Tyndall Creek and the Kern headwaters in September. Overall the air quality was good in the area this summer.

C. Use Patterns

a. Backpackers - It was a banner year for travel on the John Muir Trail and the High Sierra Trail. I observed more visitors using these 2 trails than in my previous 8 summers working at Crabtree. The San Francisco Chronicle apparently did a series of articles detailing the High Sierra Trail and I think this may have piqued peoples' interest in this classic Sierra hike. The JMT brought more wilderness travelers to the area than did any other trail in the area. This is impressive in that it is such a long (225 miles) hike and more of a time commitment than other hikes. People from all over the world come to California to hike the JMT and they are rewarded with the finest stretch of roadless wilderness travel anywhere.

For those backpackers looking for shorter hikes, the loop trips from Horseshoe Meadow and Onion Valley to Mt. Whitney continue to be very popular. We continue to see more overnight use in Sequoia NP due to the exit quota on Trail Crest. Backpackers who would otherwise exit to Whitney Portal via Trail Crest do a day hike to Mt. Whitney from Crabtree then retrace their steps to the trailhead of their trip's origin because they are unable to obtain a permit to exit Trail Crest. I spoke with the rangers from the Inyo NF who work on the east side of Mt. Whitney and they seem to think that with the success of the wag-bag program (so far) that the exit quota on Trail Crest may be unnecessary someday.

b. Stock - Stock use was down in the area this summer. Stock parties continue to visit the Crabtree area for its fishing opportunities and to climb Mt. Whitney but in lesser numbers than in the past. The only private stock parties contacted this summer were walking parties with llamas. Cottonwood Pack Station and Rock Creek Pack Station are the most frequent users of the Crabtree area. Upper Crabtree meadow receives the most overnight stock use in the area. Please refer to the stock use observations form for details on area stock use for 2008.

c. Administrative - There was a fair amount of administrative use in the area this summer. The Kern trail crew stayed at Sandy Meadow for 2 weeks in August while doing a fine job working on area trails. Plant ecologist extraordinaire Sylvia Haultain was also in the area during August assessing area meadows and advising area rangers on plant and meadow issues. She is also a fine chimney sweep.....who would have known?? The military trip, organized by Gregg Fauth, was in the area in early September with 2 representatives from the military (China Lake and Edwards) and the Chief Ranger. This gave the Chief Ranger and I the opportunity to spend a day together hiking Mt. Whitney. It was a typically busy day on Whitney and it was good to have JD's ear to discuss pertinent issues, and for him to see first hand what goes on in the "Whitney Zone" on a daily basis throughout the busy summer season.

d. Commercial - The focal point for most commercial activity in the area is Mt. Whitney. The Rock Creek Pack Station and Cottonwood Pack Station have numerous trips to the area throughout the summer which bring their clients to the Crabtree area for a hike of the west side of Mt. Whitney. Typically this means that they are in the area for 2 or 3 nights and their "base camp" is usually Upper Crabtree Meadow. They will often spot the clients up to Guitar Lake and then pick them up again after their day on Mt.

Whitney. Other commercial pack stations in the area this summer were; High Sierra Pack Trains, Three corner Round (traveling with burros), and Frontier Pack Station.

Southern Yosemite Mountain Guides were contacted in the Crabtree area numerous times this summer. They too are bringing clients to hike Mt. Whitney. Sometimes they have stock support and other trips are strictly hiking. I contacted several parties from the Sierra Mountain Center out of Bishop. They guide clients on the Mountaineers Route frequently throughout the summer, as well as guiding backpacking trips approaching from the west. I contacted parties from Sierra Wilderness Seminars, from the Shasta area, on several occasions as they were guiding groups up the Mountaineers Route on Whitney.

All of the above groups carried the appropriate permits and ID information on their trips into the Crabtree area, Commercial Use Monitoring Forms were completed for all contacts with commercial groups in the area and further information can be obtained by referring to those forms.

D. Natural Resources

a. Bear Activity - I observed bears in the Kern Canyon and Rock Creek areas while on patrol. Visitors reported seeing bears in the Rock Creek and Bearpaw areas. I did not receive any reports of bears obtaining human food or otherwise being problematic. Most visitors are carrying bear canisters whether they are required to or not. However, almost all visitors have overflow at the start of their trip and make use of the park's food storage lockers. It appears that the current system (food storage lockers and canisters) is working well as evidenced by the infrequency of bear incidents. Education of park visitors plays a vital role in keeping the bear incidents in the parks to a minimum.

b. Wildlife - It was a typical summer for wildlife sightings in the Crabtree area. Many mule deer, marmots, squirrels and chipmunks are observed throughout the summer. The songbirds are a wonderful way to wake up on early summer mornings. The pika populations seem to be about the same as when we first started taking serious note of their numbers 5 years ago. A pine marten was observed on several occasions near the summit of Mt. Whitney. Watch out pikas!!

I did observe several populations of mountain yellow-legged frogs this summer. One was in (b) (3) (B) and the other, which may not have been previously known about, was on the (b) (3) (B). There were frogs in all stages of development and what appeared to be very healthy numbers. I provided a detailed account and location to Resources Management staff (Danny Boiano).

I had an interesting wildlife observation while patrolling near Crabtree Lakes this summer. Near the inlet and waterfall at upper Crabtree Lake I came across bighorn sheep remains. A detailed report and photos were given to Erika who passed the information on to sheep researchers.



The fishing on the Kern Plateau was slower than in past seasons. In contacting anglers throughout the area the consensus was that the numbers of fish caught in area lakes was much lower than in previous seasons. My own personal experience was similar in that the fishing after early season was downright poor. The annual "fishing derby", held with the local trail crews, netted only 1 fish in 32 person hours of fishing. Could the dry conditions of the past 2 years be the culprit in resulting in lower fish numbers or less fish activity?

Fall is the season for raptor sightings. This year I observed red-tailed hawks, a ferruginous hawk, a prairie falcon and golden eagles.

c. Vegetation - Due to dry conditions, area vegetation was brown and dying by midsummer. The area meadows got a bit of a break with less grazing this summer due to less stock use. Lower Crabtree Meadow was closed to grazing this summer and was looking good at summer's end. Sandy Meadow received more grazing nights than in previous summers but seemed to handle it ok.

I conducted residual biomass monitoring in September at Upper and Lower Crabtree, Sandy, Strawberry, and Wallace Waterfall meadows.

E. Cultural Resources

a. Prehistoric Sites - No new prehistoric sites were observed this summer.

b. Historic Sites - The Smithsonian Hut on Mt. Whitney will be 100 years old in 2009.



The hut has remained largely unchanged in my years in the park. There is typically some minor maintenance on the first few patrols to the summit. Snow and ice again filled up the NPS side of the hut and I worked to make it accessible by shoveling snow. The door on the visitors side is weathered and needed some repairs, but with a little resourceful mountain maintenance it has survived another summer. The lightning diffusion system, installed in 1992, is looking good with little maintenance required. I perform an inspection of the system monthly during patrols. Some of the outlying cables do become exposed throughout the summer and I rebury them as needed. The big problem now is the increasing graffiti on all exposed surfaces in the visitors side of the hut. It is starting to look more like a subway station than a stone hut on top of the highest mountain in the lower 48 states. I am not sure what the solution is but perhaps some threatening signage is in order. The historic restoration crew has been made

aware of this problem and Thor seems to think that the graffiti could be removed somehow. I provided photographs to help him come up with a plan.

I think the park should recognize the 100-year anniversary of the hut in some way. The park made a decision to keep the hut operational after the lightning strike in 1989 (by building the lightning diffusion system). The hut is viewed, used, and appreciated by thousands of park visitors every year. It is an important part of the human history of Mt. Whitney. A couple of ideas for commemorating the 100-year anniversary of the hut include: 1) install an anniversary edition door, or 2) perhaps place a commemorative plaque on the outside of the hut.

F. Backcountry Facilities

a. Ranger Station - 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. I spoke to one of the snow surveyors this summer and he said that the woodstove does not draft well in the winter, probably due to a second stove in the back room being connected to the same stove pipe. He suggested that a longer stove pipe could remedy the situation.

b. Signs - All area signs are in good shape. I removed the "NO FIRES WITHIN 1/4 MILE OF BEAR BOX" sign at Lower Crabtree Meadow. Visitors seem to be getting the idea that fires are not permitted at Crabtree area campgrounds. I again placed signs at Lower Crabtree Meadow pointing stock users to appropriate camps in the area.

G. Trails

a. Trail Activities - The Kern trail crew spent almost 2 weeks performing maintenance on area trails. They also accomplished several projects while in the area at the request of the Crabtree ranger. The Construction trail crew spent the summer at Tyndall Creek and Forester Pass. Visitors were delighted with the much needed work that they accomplished on Forester Pass.

b. Problem Areas (prioritized) - Area trails are looking pretty good and should continue to be functional with annual maintenance. Small construction projects could be performed in following years: 1) below Timberline Lake, and 2) the steep sections that make up the "triangle" connecting the PCT and the JMT.

H. Camp Areas

a. Conditions - Bear box locations continue to see the most overnight use. The Kern Hot Springs, Junction Meadow, Wallace Creek and Crabtree Meadows bear box locations are the most heavily used camp areas in this patrol area. Most bear boxes are near trail junctions or area attractions so I do not think that removing bear boxes would necessarily disperse use elsewhere. The reality of the situation is that concentrating use may be the best way to manage the area and today's park visitors seem content to have neighbors near their campsite. I was impressed at how "pristine" the most heavily used campsites looked upon my arrival this June. It is amazing what a little rest and winter will do to restore an area. This area is very heavily used and with routine maintenance performed by the area ranger throughout the summer conditions of camp areas are certainly acceptable and some would say things look pretty darn good!

b. Sanitation - This was the third year of the wag-bag (pack out your poop) program. Compliance was good again and conditions continue to improve at Guitar Lake. While use is required on the east side (USFS) of Mt. Whitney, we are requesting that visitors camping at Guitar Lake and above use wag-bags to remove their human

waste from the wilderness. Most visitors to the area already know about the wag-bag program before arriving and those who are offended by the notion go elsewhere or plan their trip accordingly (i.e., last night out camp at Crabtree, where there is a pit toilet, and exit the backcountry from there). I do not see any need for changes in our current program, but we should continue to look at ways for improvement. The bottom line is that conditions are certainly improved at Guitar Lake and no worse on the summit of Mt. Whitney.

c. Fire Rings - Several fire-rings are maintained along Whitney Creek. Visitors continue to be confused by Sequoia Park fire regulations and illegal fire-rings crop up as a result. Very few visitors, except stock parties, use fires to cook on these days. Cold and inclement weather seem to be the greatest impetus for visitors wanting to have fires in the backcountry.

I removed and restored the last of the fire rings at Crabtree Lakes this summer. I also moved the sign that states "FIRES PROHIBITED ABOVE THIS SIGN" to the hitching post camp 1/2-mile below lower Crabtree Lake. The old location was right at 11,200' and in an area rich with old Foxtail pine trees. Crabtree Lakes was the poster place for where campfires were adversely affecting these wonderful and significant trees.

d. Firewood Availability - Currently in the Crabtree area all camps with fire rings are in areas of primarily lodgepole pine. The elevation varies within 500' or so, but most camps are along creeks or lakes where it tends to be wetter and better lodgepole habitat than foxtail.

e. Food Storage - As mentioned earlier in this report most people still use the bear boxes even though they may be carrying canisters.

I. Permit System

a. Trailheads - The Lodgepole trailhead staff did an excellent job of giving information to park visitors hiking on the High Sierra Trail. The HST brings many visitors to the Crabtree area and it was obvious that these park visitors were well educated on park regulations and pertinent issues. The job of issuing permits is an essential park function, and rangers in the field can discern very quickly whether visitors have been adequately briefed during permit issuance or whether further education is needed in the field. The NPS trailhead rangers are doing a great job. Visitors entering from the east-side (USFS) trailheads are often less informed about park regulations.

The Lone Pine trailhead office could have been better at issuing permits this summer. It was obvious that they had some staff changes throughout the summer and that visitors were at times given inaccurate information. I saw many permits this summer that did not come close to the itinerary that the visitor had planned. This is important in tracking use and being able to track down visitors if necessary.

b. Issuing Office - Nicole, Cherie, and Leslie did an excellent job in the wilderness office this summer. Visitors were well informed on conditions and other pertinent issues and so were the rangers in the field. The support that they provided to the wilderness rangers was invaluable and our jobs were made easier by their hard work. A big thank you to the wilderness office staff!!!!

K. Needs for Next Year

*1 large propane	*40 small trash bags
*20 TP	*10 large trash bags
*3 PT	*8 C cell batteries (for trail counter)
*8 burlap sacks	*1 axe handle
*15 AAA batteries	*1 oxygen regulator (1 sent out at end of 2008 season)
*12 Whitney hut inspection forms	
*25 EMS runsheets	*screen door for station (6'4" x 2'7 3/4")
*1 roll duct tape	*5 scrubber sponges
*8 skilcraft pens	*set (3) of new batteries for solar set-up. Batteries were not holding a charge at end of 2008 season.

CRABTREE TRAIL COUNTER NUMBERS FOR 2008

Trail counter installed on 06/27/08

Date	# of "hits" on trail counter
07/03	163
07/10	59
07/17	155
07/24	302
08/01	350 (est.)
08/08	400
08/15	440 (est.)
08/23	430
08/31	378
09/09	330
09/18	301
09/25	118

Total count for 2008 field season-3,308

CRABTREE WAG-BAG COUNT

1,550 distributed in 2008 (6/21-9/27)

1,050 left at Crabtree Ranger Station after 2008 field season

L. Recommendations

*Staff all wilderness ranger stations in 2009

*Improve communications on Forgotten repeater to acceptable levels in 2009

*Lower fire elevation to 10,500' in Kern Drainage in 2009

M. Inventory

See attached

LODGEPOLE END OF SEASON REPORT

2008

The majority of the work and accomplishments for the LP Subdistrict are addressed under other documents such as the SAR report, EMS report, report from Trailhead and BC rangers. The following is a brief synopsis and reference.

LE- The Lodgepole Subdistrict made 17 arrests in the year 2008. This accounts for 37% of all arrests made in the parks. Arrests in the Subdistrict and parks-wide were down from last year. These arrests included persons with felony convictions and/or gang affiliations. The Subdistrict made a double felony arrest of concession employees who were using company keys to steal money from the shower house. Thousands of dollars were stolen (and recovered). The case involved surveillance work, interrogations and search warrants. While the majority of park visitors are good people, because of these parks proximity to large urban areas, we continue to interact with very dangerous people on a daily basis.

We made numerous drug related arrests and seized all of the following drugs; Marijuana, Psilocybin Mushrooms (magic mushrooms), and Methamphetamines. We confiscated several firearms, including firearms in the possession of convicted felons. This was in addition to numerous resource and other violations contacts during the year. All of this was accomplished without injury to either officers or suspects. See Park's LE annual report.

EMS- The Lodgepole Subdistrict had the most BLS and ALS medicals in the Park's for the year 2008. This included two cardiac fatalities and an avalanche fatality in the Subdistrict. See Park's EMS report.

SAR- The Lodgepole Subdistrict had fewer numbers of SAR incidents that typical in 2008. The most notable SAR in the District for 2008 was the avalanche fatality in the area of the Watchtower/Pear Lake Trail. See Park's annual SAR report.

Structure Fire- The Lodgepole Subdistrict had the most active Structure Fire Brigade in the Park's in 2008. The Subdistrict continued with its recent efforts to improve, by maintaining an increased emphasis on the program. All core members of the Engine Company (Rangers) completed the required 10/24 training requirement for the NPS. The Subdistrict conducted annual auto extrication training, through Captain VanTassel of Fresno City Fire, which was attended by firefighter from several subdistricts. The Subdistrict hosted a "forced entry/forced exit and vertical ventilation training", also conducted by Captain VanTassel of Fresno City Fire, which was attended by firefighter from several subdistricts. This training took advantage of the scheduled demolition of the comfort station at Crescent Meadow. The Subdistrict addressed another one of the significant shortcomings cited in the Park's Structural Fire Evaluation by sending two firefighters to the NPS Fire Officer training. The Subdistrict had the highest number of firefighters that completed annual requirements in compliance with NPS-52. See Park's structural fire report.

Wildland Fire- The Lodgepole Subdistrict participated in the Park's prescribed fire program by supplying two firefighters (for structure protection and also one as a wildland firefighter) to the Wuksachi RX Burn and Engine 61 to support the burn operation and provide structure protection. The Subdistrict provided for firefighter safety by supplying Park Medics on the burn during the two days of active burn operations. The Subdistrict "hosted" the Hidden Fire. We supplied a medic to the fire for multiple operational periods and helitac (trainee) personnel to the park's ship for multiple operational periods. All permanent rangers in the Subdistrict were red carded.

Wilderness- The Subdistrict BC rangers helped cover the Kern Subdistrict in addition to their patrol, SAR, and resource management work loads. The BC rangers each did a week in the front country to maintain their EMS and LE skills. Each of the front country GS-9 rangers were given several days of BC patrol to maintain their BC skills and to re-connect them with the resource that we are protecting. See Subdistrict BC ranger reports previously submitted.

Trailhead Operation- Trailhead rangers repaired and rehabbed impacted camping areas in the Subdistrict with an emphasis on the Twin Lakes area. The informational signs were removed and replaced. Trailhead Rangers and frontcountry LE Rangers worked together on the multi-year ski trail rehab project. All six of the ski trail trailhead signs were repaired, repainted and had revised/new information posted on them. The trail markers on the Alta Trail were replaced. The trail markers on the Clover trail were extended from the Twin Lakes junction to the LP campground. The last of the markers on the Panther trail were also replaced. The debris from the old snow tube storage box was packed out from Panther Meadow and a new one was brought in. See TH report previously submitted.

Marijuana- The Lodgepole Subdistrict continued to supply rangers for garden raids and garden clean-ups.

Snow Surveys-The Subdistrict coordinated park-wide snow surveys and supported the Mineral King/Kern Subdistricts with their surveys. Lodgepole Rangers participated in snow surveys at *every* survey site with the exception of Pan Point (GG).

Subdistrict Accomplishments- I consider the ongoing Subdistrict project of revitalizing/remarking the winter trails to be one of the more significant accomplishments of the year. The trail signage and marking has slowly deteriorated over the past decades. It has taken quite awhile to get in this bad of shape and it will take several more seasons of gradual work to get the trail system back into good shape.

The tenacity of Chris Waldschmidt and Kyle Nelson in pursuing our two “quarter thieves” and eventually arresting both of them to be our second most significant accomplishment. Not that the case protected the resource nor was it a violent felony.....but the tenacity and dedication shown by these two rangers was excellent.

I would consider our work towards improving the quality of the LP Engine Company to be another significant accomplishment. We addressed the single largest problem (regarding the LP Engine Company) that was mentioned in the Park’s review. We now have two fully qualified Engineers and two fully qualified Fire Officers. We accomplished this while continuing to improve the Company on all other fronts.

Lastly, I would consider to be our “per ranger incident load” that we carried (more incidents of all types with fewer rangers) to be an ongoing significant accomplishment as well.