

Season Statistics:

Citations: 0
L.E. contacts: approximately 15
Medical: 4
Evacuations: 2
Permit checks: 48
Visitor contacts: 633

Use patterns / considerations of Trails and Camp areas:

J.M.T. P.C.T.: Approximately 80% of the visitors to this patrol area visit a portion of this trail. The most common tours are the J.M.T. trail itself, Kearsarge to Whitney and Kearsarge to Shepherds. Most common camp areas are at the base of Forester and the Tyndall Creek crossing. Both of these areas require routine patrol and maintenance for trash and fire rings and are easy marks for visitor contacts. I painted both bear boxes in this area, placed current information signs and stenciled the words NO FIRES in the hopes of reducing illegal fires. Fire regulations for the area are strenuous for the public to interpret and are often not followed due to ignorance. Nearly all visitors obtain wilderness permits from the Forest Service and from my conversations with visitors, receive little information pertinent to their area of travel. For the sake of this environment, visitors should receive with the permit more personalized service, more user friendly regulations sheet (simplification of regs.) or ideally both. The creek crossing and frog ponds camp are also popular as multi day stop overs for day hikes and peak bagers.

H.S.T.: From Junction Md. to Wallace crk. receive heavy traffic with most camping occurring on either end. The few camping options in between receive light traffic and require minimal maintenance.

Lake South America Loop: Extremely popular as a day hike / fishing excursion for visitors with extra time. The lake itself is also a popular destination for people wandering through Kern basin and near by cross country routes. The lake is considered one of the premier fishing spots of the area and receives stock traffic usually for day use. In the "Guide to Wilderness Forage Areas" the Lake South America meadow is listed as 1 acre of "moist, subalpine lakeshore" at 11950' with poor Q+Q. My recommendation to further protect this small fragile area would be to restrict stock for day rides only or for overnight parties to carry feed. This meadow is small, wet and has an extremely short growing season.

Shepherds Pass: A surprising number of people travel this trail considering the 6700' elevation gain. The trail itself is in need of rerouting since it travels in grass close to the east branch of Tyndall creek and rapidly erodes. Trail crew has considered this as a fall project for many years and if I return I plan to spend several days rerouting and rehabilitating portions of the trail.

Colby Pass/Kern-Kaweah: Entrance to perhaps the most pristine area of Sequoia National Park the trail itself seems to receive a party every 3-4 days with minimal impact. I removed many fire rings and three stock camps around the Gallots "Lake" area. Gallots "Lake" was a lake at one time, now it is seasonally a shallow lake, a swamp and an extremely wet meadow surrounded by a thin strip of meadow. The grazeable area, about 10% of the 45 acres of "Gallats Lake Meadows", is indistinguishable for stock who are likely to indiscriminately wander the 45 acres. Although the area saw little or no stock traffic this season any visits would prove destructive since fish swim between the grass in the 3 inch deep water of Gallots "Lake". In 5-10 years this area will be a full fledged meadow ready for the pressures of grazing. Until then I recommend the area be closed limiting the grazing to the two meadows adjacent to Gallots "Lake" consisting of 15 acres. (pg. 31, 95 guide-forage)

Wright / Wallace Basins: Popular with stock parties with little impact for the season. Removed 3 stock camps along the creek with wooden tables and rock fences all very entrenched and old. I also rebuilt 3 other fire rings, so stock camps remain at intervals.

Upper Kern: Rebuilt 5 fire rings at established camp areas and removed 3 others, renovation of existing stock camps.

Milestone: This area is under special stock use by permit only. One party requested to use the area but after my explanation of the character of the area decided to leave stock outside of the drainage and day hike in. Because of the possibilities of extreme resource degradation and the current restrictions I recommend that the entire basin be closed to stock travel.

Recommendations: I suggest , as stated above, that Gallots lake be closed to grazing (as alternative meadows exist), that the Lake South America meadow and Milestone basin be closed to overnight stock travel. Also consideration should be given to refining the meadow opening dates. Three categories of wet, normal and dry seem to leave a great amount of leeway for setting opening dates. For example estimated opening dates for this season were off by 2-6 weeks due to the 180% snowpack, 30% more than the 150% described as a "wet year". If the initial forecast of opening dates could be more accurately made prior to the season, there could be less confusion at stock stations than when the opening dates are extended. For example, this season could have been designated as Very Wet 175% - 200% snow pack with opening dates placed two weeks later.

Conclusions: The season was very productive with several medicals, more visitor contacts than expected and many fire rings rehabilitated or removed. The station and immediate area was organized and improved.

On the negative side, I received several complaints from visitors concerning information and service received at the various Forest Service trail head offices. The most common complaint concerned inaccurate/out dated information concerning trail conditions. One

visitor was told not to come to the Back country unless they carried ropes, climbing equipment and were experienced as mountaineers. Another party was told there was more than 200% snow. Another party was shown an N.P.S. generated trail conditions report a month old and told 'that's all we've got.' I received many other general complaints from people who felt that there was a lack of information at the F/S office and the employees were often less than helpful and had difficulty answering specific questions. A visitor recommended that the Park Service establish one trail head office on the East side so that visitor concerns and questions can be properly addressed. Although these are few complaints in actuality I contact a limited number of people actually in the area.

I also informally surveyed approximately a dozen visitors how they would feel if back country permits would be issued at a cost of five to ten dollars. The overwhelming response was positive with visitors rationalizing that management and maintenance of the area comes at a cost. One visitor felt that any fee was unjustifiable. All felt that fifteen dollars was too much.

There were many compliments from visitors, particularly those traveling the Muir Trail who stated that these parks were far cleaner and better organized than other parks/forests they had visited on their trip.