

APurcell

SIERRA CREST SUBDISTRICT 1996 SEASON SUMMARY

The 1996 season in the Sierra Crest could be written in the cronicals of Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park as the one season we hope never to have to repeat. The most significant element in this history was the search for a fellow Park Ranger and friend, Randy Morgenson. The Park Service, in its entirety, was very supportive of our efforts. People were touched by the immensity of the search and overwhelmed by the feelings of frustration and helplessness once we realized the outcome.

Additional personnel-related issues occurred as the season progressed. Shortly after arriving at his station, the McClure Ranger became very ill. He was diagnosed with Lyme disease and required to leave his station for a period of six weeks. The LeConte Ranger required medical evacuation from his station due to an unidentified illness; suspected to be stress-related. The 1996 season was also the first summer of operation for the new Sierra Crest Subdistrict Ranger. The events of the 1996 season tested skills and abilities in planning and management as this whirlwind of incidents left its tracks. Often referred to as "baptism by fire", it was a season of personal tests and triumphs. The following is a summary of incidents and actions from a very adventurous first year.

Visitor Statistics:

Contacts:

5053 (Visitor contacts made at Bench Lake from July 2 to August 11 were not available)

Total miles covered by Wilderness Rangers:

2389

Total number of Violation Notices issued: 9

2-Pets in prohibited area (Dogs)

3-Illegal fires

1-Improper food storage

1-No Wilderness permit

1-Providing false information

1-Violating terms or permit

Numerous verbal warnings issued:

Illegal fires, trash disposal/burning, noise violations, food storage violations, camping violations (too close to water/on vegetation).

Total number of Medivacs: 11

4-N.S. Trail crew members (Charlotte, Glen Pass, Sapphire Lk, Grouse Meadow)

1-BLS Dislocated shoulder (Charlotte)

1-BLS Fractured ankle (Ionian Basin)

1-Fatality; Climber (Devils Crags)

1-ALS, Head Injury (McGee Lakes)

1-BLS, Illness (LeConte Ranger)

1-BLS, HAPE (LeConte)

1-BLS,Ankle; Horse Evac.(LeConte)

Uncounted number of minor medicals:

sprained/strained ankles

sprained/strained knees

one possible head injury from a fall (Bench Lake Ranger; patient refused medical assistance).

Stock:

Total contacts: 30 horses/12 llamas at Rae Lakes

29 horses at Bench Lake

Reports received indicated stock use heaviest during August and September.

1-mule death on Northside Muir Pass

3-horse injuries: LeConte, Bench Lake, Twin Lakes

District Cooperation:

Following the Morgenson SAR, coverage for Bench Lake Station was provided by:

August 4-6, Cedar Grove Ranger J. Gould.

August 7-11, Sierra Crest Ranger C.Purcell

August 11-Sept.7, Grant Grove Ranger K.Edens

Subdistrict Accomplishments/Benefits:

Participated in Eastside April Snow Survey; Bishop and Kearsarge Passes.

Participated in multi-day Winter SAR training at Pear Lake.

Assisted initial set up of Bench Lake Ranger Station.

Patrolled Rae Lakes Loop and 60-Lakes Basin.

Covered 100 miles on the JMT from Florence Lake to Cedar Grove via Bubbs Creek.

Contacted BC Rangers at all subdistrict stations.

Participated in Leave No Trace Trainer Training for Stock users.

Conducted stock trip to Charlotte Lake.

Provided assistance to trail crew on Glen Pass reconstruction.

Conducted 40 hours BC Ranger training.

Participated in 24 hours LE Refresher training and 8 hours firearms qualifications.

Reorganized, cleaned, and resupplied Sierra Cache at Cedar Grove.

Initiated property management system for equipment issues from Sierra Crest cache.

Delivered additional bear boxes to Kearsarge Lakes, Charlotte, and Vidette Meadow camp areas.

Provided equipment for set up of Solar systems at: Charlotte, LeConte, McClure, and Rae Lakes Ranger Stations.

Recruited backcountry VIP Steve Nave to conduct patrols and service projects.

Total VIP Hours: 317 (6 weeks).

Service projects completed by VIP Nave:

LeConte Canyon Fire pits cleaned out, rebuilt, destroyed.

Palisade Creek fire pits cleaned out, rebuilt, destroyed.

Eliminated campsite on JMT upstream from Big Pete Meadow.

Charlotte Lake campsite rehab, elimination, dump site trash removal.

Kearsarge Lakes fire ring elimination, trash removal.
Vidette Meadow fire pits cleaned out, rebuilt, trash removal.
Provided patrol and backcountry station coverage for McClure from Aug 25-Sept 4.

Service Projects completed by BC staff:
Sierra Cache inventory and equipment repairs identified.
Fire Pits removed and site rehab. at Woods Lake and Twin Lakes.
Site rehab./Fire Ring removal at Lake Basin.
Site rehab./Fire Ring removal at Striped Mountain Lakes.
Site rehab./Fire Ring removal at South Fork of Kings River.

Wilderness issues identified:

Food Storage problems throughout the Subdistrict. Most prominent at Kearsarge Lakes, due to high level of bear encounters.
Discussion as to mandating the use of bear canisters along the Rae Lakes Loop.
Eliminate from our regulations that hanging food is proper food storage.
Food drops into Vidette Meadow and Charlotte area done by local Packers creates problem as food storage lockers fill.
Information provided by USFS on bear box locations and one-night limits in Charlotte/Kearsarge area is incorrect.
Serious resource impacts are occurring at bear box locations.
Backcountry signs need to be replaced/eliminated/consolidated. Experiencing difficulty in receiving signs already ordered.
Consider a maximum of three nights camping in the Rae Lakes Basin. Removing one-night limit at Rae may reduce impacts at Charlotte.
Re-enforce the one night camping limit at Charlotte Lake.
Recommendations for changes in Meadow Forage Guide; addressed in separate memo.
Restrict grazing in McClure Meadow
Move drift fence at Big Pete Meadow to protect bog area.
Proposal to remove drift fences at Stillwater and Ladder Meadows.
Resource damage to 60-Lakes Basin due to stock parties presence.
Review the one-night limit at Charlotte. Enforce this during "busy" time of year? Remove? Or keep as is. USFS info. at Kearsarge needs to be updated/changed as/if our regulations change.
Reduce the number of people permitted for cross-country travel to 6-8 (consistent with YOSE).
Reduce group size to 10-12 per party.
Permits: personal contact is necessary. Consider issuing a reservation for permit- automated but require individual to pick up permit in person.
Consider making permits for Mt. Whitney corridor only. All other permits issued by individual ranger on site. Assures rules, regs., & min. impact camping info. is received.
Pit toilets: Remove or rehab.?