



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS
THREE RIVERS, CALIFORNIA 93271

IN REPLY REFER TO:

D18

October 18, 1985

Mr. Richard Cochran
2929 West Main Street
Suite A
Visalia, California 93291

Dear Mr. Cochran:

We have carefully reviewed comments received on the Backcountry and Stock Use and Meadow Management Plans. Most of the comments received on the Backcountry Plan were supportive. Almost all of the concerns raised in comment letters were relative to the Stock Use and Meadow Management Plan.

Based on our review of the comments and evaluation of the Stock Plan, we are considering several modifications to it. We have incorporated these modifications in a new draft of the Plan and are sending it to a few people to get an initial reaction before preparing it for final review.

The revisions are basically as follows:

1. The format has been revised to put the objectives, rationale, and processes in the text portion of the Plan and the details of actual limitations and specific guidelines in the appendices. This will simplify the Plan for our own management use and also responds to comments that the Plan was too complex.
2. In this Plan we are indicating that the 1971 Park Master Plan will be revised to be clearly supportive of continued use of stock in the backcountry. The Master Plan called for ultimate elimination of stock use.
3. Make clear that there will be opportunity for public review when any significant changes to the Plan are proposed. This further simplifies the same provision in the draft Plan.
4. Simplify the forage area opening dates so that a set of dates applies to a general drainage basin rather than for each separate meadow. The same basic opening dates are retained but there are fewer of them, which makes it easier for the visitor to understand and follow and easier for us to manage.

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5. Simplify grazing use levels to the effect that average use levels of the period from 1977 to 1984 continue until data from the monitoring program indicate a need to change. We have eliminated the detailed limits of stock use nights per acre and per month and the three levels of use. Actual use will be correlated with monitoring data and when an unnatural trend becomes evident by comparison with similar ungrazed forage areas, or by evidence from other data, we will consider limits on the number of nights per meadow, number of stock per meadow, adjustment of opening dates, or temporary closures. These are the same controls we have used in the past.

This responds to comments that use levels were much too complex to follow. At the same time a process is established that allows for control of grazing use levels when biological data from the monitoring program indicate a need.

6. Expand the distance stock parties can travel from designated trails to campsites from 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile with provision for designating other special camp areas at greater distances where appropriate. This will allow opportunity for more separation between stock users and backpackers. It also responds to comment that some traditional stock camps would have been closed by the 1/4 mile distance.
7. Leave some additional trails and areas open to stock travel.
 - Cartridge Pass Trail
 - North Monarch Divide off trail travel area (Horseshoe, State Lakes, Lake of the Fallen Moon)
8. Make it clear that occasional, inadvertent stock drift through protected meadows will be tolerated but camping next to and turning stock out on those meadows will not be allowed.
9. Modify the list of meadows closed to grazing for scientific study and visitor enjoyment by eliminating from this list those meadows that had already been permanently closed to grazing in the past, substituting Mt. Guyot Meadow for Sandy Meadow, and including Lower Rock Creek Lake #2 Meadow.

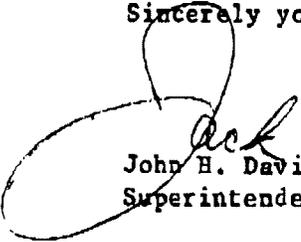
We feel that through the above mentioned modifications we have addressed and resolved the major concerns to the Plan without compromising resource protection.

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Because of the revisions being considered, we did not include the usual maps with this draft. They will be in the final draft. We have made no firm decisions. Your comments at this time will help us to decide on these proposals. Also, this is an informal review; your reaction to these proposals can be made by calling, visiting us at the office, or in writing. We do need to hear from you by November 20, 1985, so that we can decide on these proposals and prepare a final draft for public review.

Thanks for your time and interest.

Sincerely yours,



John H. Davis
Superintendent

Enclosure

EXHIBIT "B"

Stock Use Nights in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks - 1990 through 2010

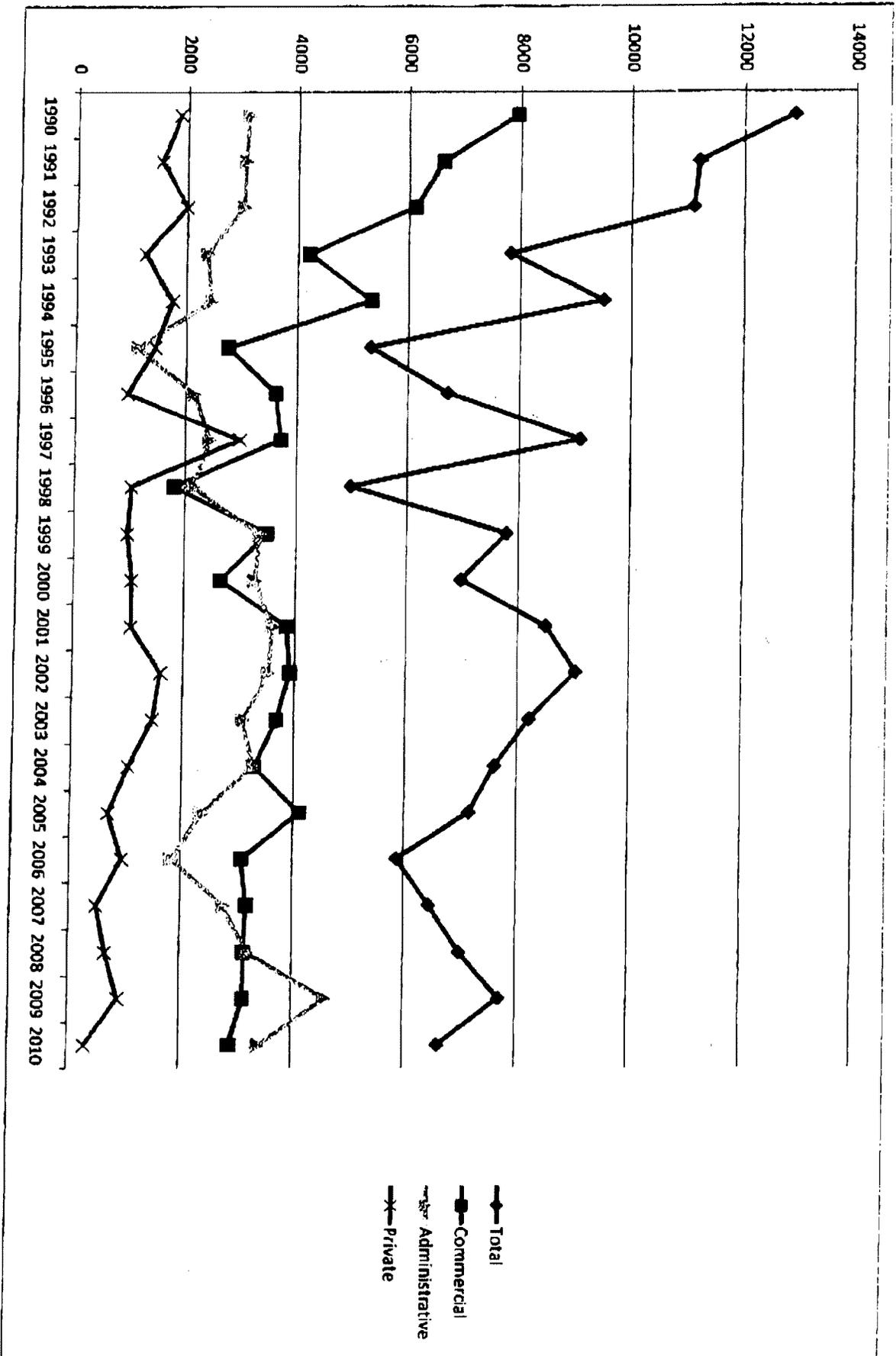


EXHIBIT "C"

EXHIBIT C

Summary of the History of Commercial Packing in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Excerpts from 'The MULE MEN – A History of Stock Packing in the Sierra Nevada'
Reprinted with permission by Louise A. Jackson

The mule arrived on this continent in 1519 with the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez, and it played a key logistical role in the conquest of Mexico, providing the means to carry supplies and munitions to inland territories. After Cortez came Coronado, Rivera, Portola, Father Junipero Serra, and other Spanish explorers and missionaries, who also brought in pack animals on their North American land expeditions... The continuing exploration of California and the development of new communities were almost totally dependent on the movements of pack trains.. Probably the first domesticated pack animals in the area were those accompanying Father Francisco Garces in 1776. Although Garces was not the first European to reach the southern Sierra Nevada foothills, he was the first to record his findings and to open a primitive trail for future pack trains... During these early Spanish and Mexican explorations of the late 1700s and early 1800s, pack trains were the most common means of long-distance transportation in California.

By 1832 trading trails had begun to crisscross the West, extending from the old Spanish missionary trails out of Mexico and the American Southwest to California... Before long, horses, mules and donkeys were common couriers in the foothills and valleys of California...

Mule trains by the hundreds coursed the California foothills from 1848 through the 1850s... In addition to government efforts, private interests invested in road development in the Sierra Nevada. The central and southern High Sierra areas, where wagon roads were considered impossible, were surveyed for packing trails. In the late 1850s, after gold and silver were discovered in the deserts east of the Sierra, entrepreneurs on the west side who wished to supply the isolated east side had only two trails to choose from. The Dennison Trail was a rough, winding affair that linked nearly every mining camp, stock range, and sheep camp south of the Kings River... Commercial companies also built toll roads from supply bases to the bigger mining communities. In the early 1860s two toll trails began construction in the wilderness area of the Kaweah and Tule Rivers. For four consecutive summers, pack trains carried supplies to crews building the Jordan and Hockett Trails. The Jordan Toll Trail, which extended almost one hundred miles, was built in 1861 and 1862. The Hockett Trail, completed in 1864, was one of many roads and trails built during the gold rush that were used by the military during the Civil War and throughout the western Indian campaigns.

..in 1860 the legislature of California mandated a series of geological field surveys of the Sierra Nevada to map the area and catalog its resources. Professor Josiah Dwight Whitney, who had conducted several geological surveys in the eastern United States, was selected to head the project. Whitney's team conducted the field work for fourteen years, beginning in December 1860. Few of the surveyors had experience traveling with pack trains, so for longer expeditions they hired hunters, cooks, and mule drivers.

In June 1863 Whitney, Brewer, and engineer Charles Hoffmann conducted an extensive survey of Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, and the high regions around Mono Pass. They hired a man named John to accompany them with two pack mules for their provisions... The next year another field party began extensive explorations of the highest portions of the Sierra. Those explorations, begun in May 1864, lasted into October. Brewer, Hoffmann, and Gardner made up the field team that explored the wilderness regions of the Kern, Kaweah, Kings and San Joaquin headwaters. Dick Cotter, a miner, rancher, carpenter and jack-of-all-trades, joined the surveys as packer.

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, the military used horse, mule, and even camel trains in their western Indian campaigns... With the outbreak of the Civil War, military concerns dominated development in the West. As it had during the Mexican War and early Indian wars, the U.S. Army enlisted westerners – including mule packers – to help in the war effort... In California, the Union needed a quick and direct route across the Sierra to protect its interest in the Coso mines and to facilitate the movement of troops and supplies between Camp Babbitt in Visalia and Fort Independence in Owens Valley. In 1863 a new trail was begun by John Hockett and Union soldiers were dispatched to help with its construction. For two summers weekly pack trains wound up the finished portions of the trail to supply the crews as the work progressed. Portions of the older Jordan Trail were incorporated into the route, so other trains had to use the more northern Mono Pass during the construction. The Hockett Toll Trail was completed in the summer of 1864 and remained the principal trail route across the southern Sierra for the next forty years.

Throughout the West after the Civil War, the army employed civilian pack trains equipped with aparejos rather than using wagon convoys on campaigns against transitory Indians. Their mobility and speed were proven to be so successful in operations against the Paiutes, Shoshones, and Bannocks that General George Crook convinced the government it should purchase three of the trains he had used in the campaigns. Thus started the pack service of the United States Army.

The influx of government packing work in the Sierra began in the 1880s, serving military projects. One of the first, the 1881 Langley and Army Signal Corps scientific expedition to Mount Whitney, engaged a pack outfit to carry the group's astronomical instruments and supplies from Lone Pine to a base camp at Guitar Lake below the summit.

From 1891, with the creation of Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant National Parks, the army was appointed to manage the new parks in absence of adequate personnel and funding sources. Pack trains were the main mode of transportation in the parks, and cavalry deployments were some of the largest pack outfitters both inside and outside park boundaries. With military packing needs increasing, local ranchers were often called upon to provide pack animals and act as guides.

Cavalry units maintained control of summer operations in Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant National Parks until 1914, when the Department of Interior took over the management with civilian superintendents and employees. By that time, with the sheep and cattle grazing problems resolved, new trails could be constructed and maintained for easier recreational use. Soon recreation became the primary focus of the Sierra's national parks.

Even before there were good trails, the 1870s and 1880s saw growing recreational use of the High Sierras. Whole families escaping the summer heat and unhealthy conditions of the central valley headed into the highlands to camp at old mining and lumbering "resorts." From these bases they adventured farther into the backcountry on pack trains, usually using the stock of nearby ranchers.

With the first ascents of Mount Langley and Mount Whitney in 1871 through 1873, mountaineering parties began to take packing expeditions across the Dennison, Jordan, and Hockett Trails, as well as other rough mule trails. Soon adventurers, hunters, fishermen, and nature enthusiasts also started packing into the alpine regions. For the first time, ranchers hired out their horses and mules and acted as guides for those recreationists.

By 1868, on the west side, Frank Dusy was offering his professional services, packing and guiding parties into the Kings and Kaweah backcountry... even Muir himself, an intrepid walker, used pack mules, if reluctantly. In 1875, with George Bayley, Charles Washburn, and "Buckskin Bill" as mule master, "all well mounted on tough obstinate mules," Muir explored the Kings and Kaweah high country.

The first expedition to Mount Whitney that included women, the Porterville group of 1878, involved over two weeks of mule and horse packing from Dillon's Mill to Mount Whitney and back.

Several professional packers were operating that year (1890). On the east side, guided parties from Independence and Lone Pine traveled the Hockett Trail on fishing and hunting trips and on excursions to Mount Whitney. On the west side, Dyer and his friends met packer John Fox in the Visalia Big Tree Grove, later renamed the General Grant Grove, who led them across sheep trails to his camp at Cedar Grove on the Kings River. A year later, John Muir wrote of "Mr. J. Fox, bear killer and guide, who owns a pack train and keeps a small store of provisions in the valley for the convenience of visitors." Muir and his party engaged him to "Manage our packs" and lead them down the rough trail into Paradise Valley.

With the formation of Yosemite, Sequoia and Grant Grove National Parks in 1890 and the forest reserves in 1893, commercial tourist packing became even more popular, but the trails and access roads still were a mess... Visitors to the national parks depended on commercial pack outfits to lead them through the undeveloped terrain of the high country.

Beginning in the 1890s the creation of three new national parks and the forest reserve system generated a consistent source of income for packers. To encourage tourism in the parks, the government launched major trail-building and maintenance efforts, hiring local commercial packers to haul supplies to the workers... In 1914, after the cavalry moved out, the parks were left with little stock of their own, which created the need for still more commercial packers. As the years passed, government packers replaced many commercial pack outfits on trail crews, but both the parks and the national forests still hired outside packers throughout the twentieth century.

The three main types of government projects that packers supported in the early 1900s were fire suppression, trail construction and maintenance, and bridge construction, as well as miscellaneous work such as the construction and supplying of ranger stations and railroads...

Other government projects of the period also brought business to the growing number of packers. The United States Geodetic Survey continued to send out surveying parties to create topographical maps of the High Sierra region. These expeditions spent whole summers in the backcountry and depended on mule packing for supplies.

In addition to working directly on park development projects, packers reaped the benefits of the growth in tourism resulting from that development. One of the first operations to take advantage of the new opportunities was Broder & Hopping. In 1898 homesteader John Broder began a commercial packing operation out of Three Rivers when an attorney from San Francisco hired him to guide a party into the Giant Forest area.

In 1901 Charles Robinson expanded his Owens Valley mining pack train to include tourist packing, taking several parties over Kearsarge Pass into the backcountry. When Robinson's son Allie took over the operation, he directed even more resources into the growing tourist trade. The Robinsons handled all the Sierra Club High Trips from 1912 until World War II.

In addition to tourists and the Park Service, water and power companies needed the services of pack outfits, too. As early as 1886 the Mount Whitney Power Company and the San Joaquin Electric Company employed pack trains to support their explorations of the backcountry in search of hydroelectric plant and reservoir sites. When the first power plants were built on the Kaweah in 1886, the Kern in 1897, the Tule in 1909, and the Kings River in 1919, mule trains hauled supplies to the construction sites. On the Kaweah River, dams were built at Wolverton Creek and Monarch, Crystal, Franklin, and Eagle Lakes in the summers of 1904 and 1905.

One of the most unusual jobs was undertaken in 1909. Six years earlier, a military reservation for scientific and weather observations had been established on the summit of Mount Whitney. After the citizens of Lone Pine completed a pack trail to the summit in 1904, the Smithsonian Institution made plans for a stone shelter and three-room observatory, and in 1908, a packing contract was awarded to Charles W. Robinson of Independence.

As recreational fishing became more and more popular, the stocking of fish in the southern Sierra's barren streams and lakes became another job of packers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Officials at both Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks actively promoted fish planting to encourage recreationists.

The founding of the Sierra Club in 1892 created a new form of recreation for hundreds of California city dwellers. Between 1902 and 1946, the club's annual High Trips brought commercial stock packing its biggest impetus to date. The Sierra Club's second expedition, in 1902, was the largest backcountry trip into the southern Sierra yet undertaken. On the 1902 trip, over two hundred Sierra Club members were packed into a two-week base camp in the Kings River Canyon. The packers for this outing were from Kanawyer's Resort at Millwood, and Broder & Hopping in Giant Forest.

The interest generated by Sierra Club trips in the 1920s gave birth to more packing outfits and higher profits... The growing tourist trade was not the only source of income for commercial packers. Providing services to cow camps and backcountry resorts brought in some income, too. But it was government contracts that provided the most reliable source of work. Commercial pack outfits supplied backcountry rangers in various survey, insect control, logging, firefighting, and other assignments. They also hauled materials for building and repairing ranger stations, fire lookouts, trails, bridges, dams, and camps.

EXHIBIT "D"



EXHIBIT "E"

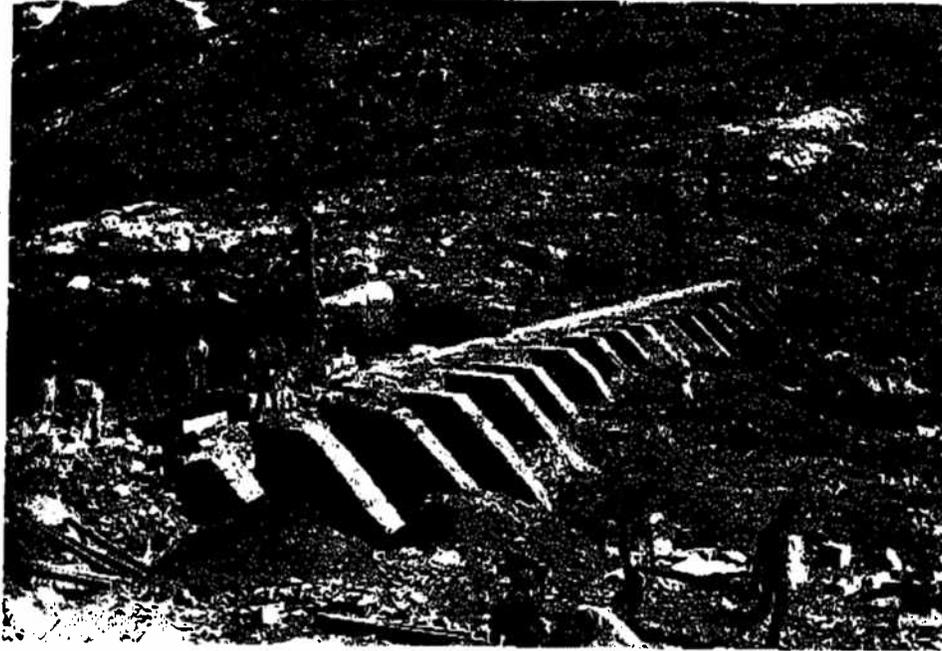


EXHIBIT "F"

