



Mule Pack Section



Spring 2004

Annual Newsletter

MULE PACK

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In This Issue

The Mule Pack Section has five trips planned for the summer of 2004. The season starts with a week-long visit to the Genevieve/Dorothy Lake basin in late July. This little visited area is located above Convict Lake and is regarded as an all-time favorite location by those who have been there. For those who prefer trips with fewer days, early August provides a four-day trip to Cottonwood Lakes. Cottonwood basin is frequently on the Mule Pack schedule as it provides a range of hiking experiences; many lakes are located in a relatively flat basin for those looking for moderate day-hikes. For those seeking more vigorous outings, Mt Langley (14,026') and the dramatic trails to New Army Pass and Old Army Pass beckon.

The final trips of the season overlap during Labor Day weekend. Lake Ediza is in the Ansel Adams Wilderness in the shadow of the Minarets and Mt Ritter. Two layover days provide time to explore the many nearby lakes. This was last visited by the Mule Pack section in 1999. The other two trips are going to areas popular with mountain climbers but also offer many day hikes for those of us who like to keep our feet on the ground. Big Pine Lakes has been a staple of the Mule Pack Section over the years but has been missing from the schedule since 2001. A five-day trip in 2004 provides another opportunity to climb to Palisade Glacier – the largest in the Sierras – and enjoy the

beauty of the turquoise lakes and the spires of Palisade Crest.

Closing the season is a trip to Charlotte Creek, a new location for the Mule Pack Section. A hike over Kearsarge Pass to Charlotte Creek provides a base-camp near the Pacific Crest trail with access to several trails for day hikes. Day hike destinations on this full week trip will include the Rae Lake basin and Charlotte Dome, one of the most impressive granite domes outside of Yosemite. This very popular area is usually seen only on multi-day backpacks. The timing is set to explore the area after the summer crowds disperse.

The six trips in 2003 contended with unusual weather but otherwise were enjoyed by all. Early season visitors to the Sierras were greeted with unusually hot weather. This was followed by a long stretch of unsettled weather featuring afternoon rain nearly every day. By Labor Day the rain had moved south to the high desert, a fact much appreciated by those on the Cottonwood Lakes trip.

We have several trip reports from 2003, including one from our newest and youngest members, Brent and Chelsey. On the same trip, Jim and Peggy, their great-grandfather and grandmother, completed their second mule pack of the summer. The Stewart clan then claims the honors for both the oldest and youngest participants of 2003.

For Early Trip Planning, Check the Web

Those of you who enjoy really long range planning can obtain the earliest notice of the summer trips by checking the Angeles Chapter website. The Mule Pack schedule appears on the website by December of the previous year. The trips also appear in the Advance Notices section of the March—July 4 issue of the Schedule of Activities. For 2005 this will be Schedule 298 which will be mailed in February 2005.

2004 Mule Pack Trips

Jul 25 - 31 Sun-Sat Mule Pack

O: Lake Genevieve (John Muir Wilderness): Sun morning hike 5 mi over Laurel Pass (10,800), 1300' gain, with just your daypack while hired packers carry your gear (up to 50 lbs) to a base camp in a lake-filled basin surrounded by colorful mountains. Five full layover days to hike, explore, photo, fish and enjoy nature in this beautiful and little-visited area. Hike out Sat, 7 mi, 600' gain/2800' loss, via Convict Creek canyon. 2 additional participants with 4 x 4 needed. Lmt:12. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. Send email address (or 2 SASE), requested info & \$250 check to Ldr: John Kaiser, Co-Ldrs: Yvonne Tsai & Sandy Burnside



Cottonwood Lakes



Lake Genevieve

Aug 6-9 Fri-Mon Mule Pack

O: Camp Without a Pack at Cottonwood Lakes: Hired packers carry gear while we hike separately with only our daypacks. Fri morning hike 5 mi., 1300' gain to campsite in the Cottonwood Lake Basin. Bring fishing pole if you love to fish, hiking spirit if you love to wander around a lake filled basin. Mon hike out. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. Send 2 SASE, requested info & \$240 check to Ldr: Christine Gutierrez, Co-Ldr: Susan Richmond

Sep 3-6 Fri-Mon Mule Pack

O: Camp Without a Pack at Ediza Lake: Hired packers carry gear while we hike separately with only our daypacks. Fri morning hike 8.5 mi., 1500' gain to campsite along Ediza Lake. Bring fishing pole if you love to fish, hiking spirit if you love to explore. Mon hike out. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. Send email address (or 2 SASE), requested info & \$200 check to Ldr: Dave Cross, Co-Ldr: Christine Gutierrez

Sep 3-7 Fri-Tue Mule Pack

O: Camp Without a Pack at Big Pine Lakes & Palisade Glacier: Hired packers carry gear while we hike separately with only our daypacks. Fri morning hike 6 mi, 2400' gain to campsite at gorgeous mixture of lakes, meadows, glaciers, & mountains. Sat—Mon hike, photo, fish, enjoy scenery, or relax in camp. Tue hike out. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. Send email address (or 2 SASE), requested info, & \$150 check to Co-Ldr: Alan Williams, Ldr: Dan Butler

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Reservation/Cancellation Policy: Send two 4" x 9" Self Addressed Stamped Envelopes (SASEs) with recent experience & condition, rideshare info, H&W phones, email, and a check—payable to the Mule Pack Section—for the amount shown to the listed trip contact. Contact addresses are on page 3. Email can be substituted for one or two of the mailings if noted in the trip write-up.

Cancellation notices received 45 days or more prior to the trip will result in a full refund. Persons canceling in less than 45 days before the trip will receive a 90% refund only if a suitable replacement is found.

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Sep 5-11 Sun-Sat Mule Pack

O: Charlotte Creek (Kings Canyon NP): Sun hike 8 mi 2600' gain over Kearsarge Pass with your daypack while hired packers carry gear (up to 55 lbs) to scenic base camp by Charlotte Creek (10,370'). Five full layover days to hike, explore, photo, fish, and enjoy nature at Kearsarge Pinnacles, Charlotte Dome, Glenn Pass, Rae Lakes, Vidette Meadow. Sat hike out. Limit 10. Note reservation/cancellation policy on page 2. Send 2 SASE (email can substitute for one), requested info, \$250 check to Ldr: Yvonne Tsai, Co-Ldrs: John Kaiser, Laura Joseph

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Big Pine Lakes, late Spring



On the Trail to Palisade Glacier

Forest Service Management Plan

The trailhead quotas in the Ansel Adams & John Muir Wildernesses continue to be lowered, going down another 10% this year. However, the regulations are interpreted with enough flexibility to permit packers to take groups into areas where daily quotas are extremely low.

The packers have continued to adjust their pricing structure as a result of the annual service day quotas that were imposed by the 2001 Management Plan. Especially hard hit are the costs of the dunnage-drop trips that the Mule Pack Section plans. Because we have a large number of people, our trips use a significant portion of the packer's service day allotment. Because our trips use relatively few pack stock, the traditional pricing based on the number of pack animals did not generate enough income to compensate for these service days.

Newsletter Subscription Policy:

The Mule Pack newsletter is published annually and is sent at no charge to all who subscribe. Subscriptions are for four years and can be renewed as often as you wish. Subscriptions & renewals are automatically given to participants on trips. Others should contact the newsletter editor:

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Check your mailing label: If your label contains a box stating "please renew" we want to you to do just that. Just send an email, leave a phone message, or drop a note saying "please continue".

Electronic Copy

Newsletters are also posted on the web in pdf format with pictures in full color. Check the file size — dial-up access could be slow. But if you have broadband —cable or DSL—you can view or download current and past newsletters.

2003 Trip Reports

Paradise Valley July 3-6, 2003

Submitted by Ed Lulofs

Our trip to Paradise Valley showed us how hard it is to get to heaven — just kidding. But the highway connection between 99 and 180 was a mess. Once we arrived at King's Canyon, we managed to find each other successfully, but were unable to camp together because the campground was full.

The packer announced that the permits had to be obtained at the wilderness office, unlike the east side where the packers always obtain the permits. So I nervously waited my turn for 30 minutes at the wilderness office worried that the permits would not be available. After looking up the regulations in a book, the ranger determined that the permits for the packer were exempt from the quota and issued it. Then we found out about a new parking permit fee of \$30.

After overcoming the barriers of civilization and bureaucracy, we headed out to a more congenial location in Paradise Valley. We had a full trip of twelve campers with several people on the waiting list who were unable to be accommodated on the trip. The packers loaded up pretty easily and we were able to get all our gear on the mules.

Four of our group--Richard, Auna-Kristina, Leslie, and Ruthanna--rode in on horses. The rest of us--Ed, Norm, Noni, Cynthia, Maria, David, Beth, and Susan--hiked in through the heat. My assistant leader Norm got overheated but was fine after some shade and water. We hikers reached camp before the mules did.

Several people found that I started happy hour too early. What can I say? I am a happy leader.

Auna-Kristina and David competed in the competition for the loudest camper--louder than Ed if you can imagine that! Cynthia received the award for sleeping the latest. Ruthanna wins the award for most pampered camper.

Friday several of us explored Paradise Valley and a little of the South Fork canyon beyond the trail. Saturday morning and evening a bear cub showed up. We never saw its mother. Other wildlife included a young buck and several does, as well as small-sized varmints. Two of our group swore they saw a new type of varmint that was pink, but this happened during Happy Hour, so it's hard to say what it was. The rest of the day on Saturday, we went in several different directions. Ed hiked uphill towards Goat mountain. Noni, Maria, and Ruthanna hiked down to Mist Falls and back. Norm became ill and hiked out. Fortunately, Noni is a rated leader and was able to take over the assistant's position.

Beth spent several hours everyday painting landscapes. Her work is on exhibit at the gallery at Yosemite and elsewhere.

Sunday we had short religious ceremony and then a hot hike out. Maria did great on her first backcountry trip. Leslie and Ruthanna rode out. Leslie and her horse had a disagreement but Leslie came out OK. Richard received a warning of a citation because he left a bottle of Windex visible in the car. Have bears developed a taste for Windex?

We said goodbye and headed back to uncivilization.

Thousand Island Lake July 24-27, 2003

Submitted by Scott Meek

Thousand Island Lake is one of the most scenic locations in the Sierras. It is peppered with what appear to be literally a thousand islands, ranging in size from a few hundred yards long down to rocks that barely break the surface. To top it off, it sits at the base of Banner Peak, which is exceptionally picturesque by itself due to its scattering of year-round snow fields. Normally a location such as this would be overrun by tourists or campers. However, Thousand Island Lake is protected by its somewhat re-



Thousand Island Lake & Banner Peak

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mote location, being about 10 miles with 2,000+ feet of gain from the nearest trailhead. A typical backpack would take two days to reach this site when carrying enough provisions for several layover days. This cuts down on visitors but makes it ideally suited for a mule pack, which can reach the Lake in one day without too much sweat.

From the Agnew Meadows pack station there are basically two trails to Thousand Island Lake. For the hike in on Thursday we chose the lower trail that parallels the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River. Olaine Lake provided our first rest stop. Although it is quite attractive and warranted several photographs, it paled in comparison to the lakes ahead. Later Archie, who had been here several times before, introduced us to an exquisite lunch spot right on the river that offered foot soaking in the icy cold water.

Our campsite was located a few hundred yards above Thousand Island Lake, which required a short hike for water but provided a spectacular view and kept us out of the occasional wind. While setting up camp we encountered one of many minor "emergencies" when one participant discovered that he had brought his tent A and the poles for his tent B, which were of course too short for tent A. Other trip incidents included a missing sleeping bag, inadequate rain flies, a tent with unsealed seams, and a punctured sleeping pad. Actually, all of these matters were handled with very little inconvenience.

On Friday most of the group hiked off-trail to the unnamed peak on the north end of the lake. This route provides the best views of the Thousand Island Lake. It starts out spectacular and just gets better, with more and more of the island network coming into



Outlet from Thousand Island Lake

view, as you climb higher above the lake. As Pam commented, "How much beauty can you take in, in one hour?" After lunch on the peak, we continued off-trail to find a series of ponds along the ridge north of the lake. Here we received a lesson in always carrying rain gear. Although the early morning had been clear and fairly warm, the mid-morning clouds that had provided a dramatic backdrop behind Banner Peak were now giving us rain and LOTS of hail. Even though it was still July, the hail was heavy enough that it covered the ground and was stinging the hands of any hikers without gloves. The hail quickly melted, and our campsite was fairly dry in time for the evening happy hour.

Saturday's hike took us on-trail past Emerald and Ruby Lakes to Garnet Lake where we had lunch. Garnet Lake, being about 1½ miles long, is almost as large as Thousand Island Lake and offers similarly wonderful views including Mount Ritter as well as Banner. After lunch we departed from the trail to explore the smaller, unnamed lakes

between Garnet and Thousand Island. This hike included a swim in one of the remote ponds that was just small enough to not be too chilly.

Our hike out on Sunday followed the higher route along the Pacific Crest Trail. This route is less shaded than the lower trail, but offers great views across the San Joaquin valley to Banner, Ritter, the Minarets, and Shadow Lake. Due to the late snowfall last spring we were treated to a tremendous array of wildflowers, which are usually gone by this time of year. All and all, it was another wonderful trip.

Honeymoon Lake July 28—Aug 3, 2003

Submitted by John Kaiser

*Rain, rain, go away
Come again some other day*

could have become a daily complaint on this trip, as the rain did come again almost every day. However, the spirit shown when all 12 members came to the

pre-trip dinner at Tom's Place did not waver. One or more hikes were held each day and when they were cut short by rain, it provided a good excuse for an early start to happy hour. The roll of plastic that had been in the leader's gear for many years finally found a use. The small shelter provided just enough room for all during the afternoon and evening festivities and the sound of water cascading off the tarp

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2003 Trip Reports

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was reassuring during the rain showers. The food supply at happy hour never let up during the week, and Sandy's quesadillas were a special treat.

Although the trip was listed as Upper Pine Lake, the base camp was shifted a short distance to Honeymoon Lake to provide more convenient access to the two major routes to the many day-hike destinations. Despite Monday's stiff climb of 3000' up Pine Creek Canyon to our campsite, nearly everyone found the energy on Tuesday to hike over Pine Creek Pass to French Lake. Along the way we passed a magnificent garden of columbine and were greeted at the pass by a couple of fat marmots. Several of our group were content to relax after reaching French Lake, but others pressed on through upper French Canyon to reach Moon Lake and L Lake. Later in the week, Sandy and Laura returned to hike down French Canyon to Royce Falls, and Lowell returned for an extended photography session at the columbine garden.

A hike up through Granite Park to Italy Pass was another long outing that was attended by almost everyone. The trail led through meadows, over granite, and past waterfalls and lakes. At the pass, many of the lead group — Yvonne, Sandy, Keith, Winnette, Laura, and Ron — decided to navigate the jumble of boulders that is known as Mt. Julius Caesar. Bob, Rich, Paul, and Susanne decided that Italy Pass was reward enough. John, arriving in the last group, pursued the others toward the peak. The lead group made it to the top (13,200'), signed the register, and enjoyed the 360° views before the clouds literally descended. John turned back just short of the summit when he met the others coming down, looked up, and found that the peak had vanished in the clouds. However, his reward for the effort was his first view of Sky Pilot and Alpine Gold in full bloom. The descent over wet boulders through clouds, rain and hail will be remembered by all and was accomplished without major mishap.

Shorter hikes were just as rewarding. Golden Lake, called a little jewel by Susanne, was very close, was visited by everyone, and merited a return visit by

several. Royce Lakes also proved to be popular — a series of lakes above the tree line, framed by Treasure, Feather, Royce and Merriam Peaks. During one picture session at Royce Lakes, a marmot tried to make a meal of the grips on Winnette's hiking poles. Other favorite memories for the group include the



Bob tries the fishing at Golden Lake

relaxing pleasure of a day reading in camp and the sight of both Bob and Yvonne hiking through the rain with umbrellas — now that was being prepared! Reports of the beauty of Chalfant Basin from Yvonne, Paul, Rich, and Bill had the rest of us wishing for one more day of hiking, but unfortunately the week was drawing to a close.

By Saturday, the early happy hours had taken a serious toll on the wine supply, but Bob produced rum, and Keith made hot, spiced rum to warm us on our final evening under the tarp. Lowell, arriving at camp after lingering in the rain for more photographs, announced that he had discovered that "hiking in the rain was not bad at all". So in the end, and with apologies to Alan Sherman ("Camp Grenada"), we close the Pine Creek trip with

*Camp is very entertaining,
And we had a lot of fun despite the raining.*



Royce Lake & Merriam Peak

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Happy hour under the tarp
Waiting for Sandy's quesadillas



Smiling in the sunshine: Susanne, Paul, Bill & Yvonne, seated.
Rich, Lowell, Bob, Sandy, Winnette, Keith, & Laura, standing.

Cottonwood Lakes, August 29-September 2

Submitted by Yvonne Tsai

My very first mule pack as the leader came off with an eventful start when I promptly took the wrong turn leaving the mule pack station, taking my faithful followers thru some cross-country hiking on bumpy terrain to get back to the correct trail. The group had a very forgiving spirit, and I will remember that error in the years to come.

We had a congenial group of 12, with an age range from 8 (Brent), 10 (Chelsey), to 83 (James, their great-grandfather), spanning four generations. One interesting observation on our Cottonwood Lakes packers is that when they charge us a flat fee based on service days per person instead of by stock animals, our gear (45 lb per person) along with two 30-gallon bear-resistant food-storage drums can miraculously fit onto four mules.

Our base camp was located between Cottonwood Lakes # 2 and #3, next to a small pond, a very picturesque setting with majestic Mt. Langley in full view. A conscientious ranger, Lynn Bauer, visited soon after we set up camp. She checked our wilderness permit and went over the national forest regulations with me. After the official business was over, we talked about birds since I noticed her binoculars



Cottonwood Lake 3

hanging around her neck. She enthusiastically told me of the recent sightings of osprey -- a most unusual bird in this area. Indeed, during our stay, quite a few of us had the pleasure of watching osprey flying overhead, once even with a fish clasped in its claws, as witnessed by John early one morning.

In the three layover days, we had both easy and challenging hikes available to participants. The easy hikes involved bagging lakes in the relatively flat basin. There are the five Cottonwood Lakes (#1 to #5, great simple names!) then there are South Fork Lake, Muir Lake, Long Lake, High Lake, and Cirque Lake within day-hike distance from our base camp. They were visited by many of us and have provided entertainment to our youngsters. The champion of skipping stones is Chelsey who held the record of skipping ten times. She even made up a song to commemorate the event and shared it with us at happy hour.

For the vertically inclined and duly challenged, there are passes (New Army Pass and Old Army Pass) and peaks to bag. John, Fred S, Nancy and I bagged Cirque Peak (12,900 ft) on the first layover day, and Mt. Langley (14,026 ft) on the third layover day.

On the second layover day, we woke to see storm

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clouds low overhead, and moving in at very fast speed. Blue sky would appear for a few brief minutes just to tease us. We brought up the long roll of plastic sheet and proceeded to install our tarp over the happy-hour site. John and I thought we were getting pretty good at this chore, having done the same on the Honeymoon Lake Mule Pack several weeks earlier. However when we returned from our day-hike, we discovered that the wind had won and the tarp was on the ground. The problem was our overly-ambitious attempt in using the entire roll as the cover.

The weight was just too much under the constant pounding of the wind. Fortunately, no rain came at all that day, although the dark clouds looked very threatening at times.

The happy hour feasts were as good as ever. John, with assistance from Laura and Chelsey, shared with us freshly cooked quesadillas, and everyone was very happy with that warm morsel in the chilly afternoon.



Cottonwood Lake #4 and Army Pass

There were smoked salmon, assortments of gourmet cheeses, crackers, nuts, cookies, potato chips, carrot and celery sticks, chocolates, and, oh yes, an Armenian cucumber from Nancy's garden. During one happy hour we were entertained by a good-sized marmot making sharp and loud calls about 15 yards from us; it then dashed directly toward us as if to join the happy hour festivities. At the last moment it jumped into its den, which so happened to be in a hollow in the very tree we had selected for our tarp.

The exit hike on Tuesday was very pleasant with a light breeze and partially overcast sky. I was glad that my co-

leader, Christine, requested to lead this hike since the Mt. Langley hike on the previous day (3000' gain, 9.5 miles round trip) took quite a bit of energy out of me. The packer came out with our gear around 12:45 pm, which is a record time for all my trips. We were on our way home shortly and arrived in L.A. before sunset. Had a great time! Can hardly wait to go back to the Sierra again.

Cottonwood Highlights

by Chelsey and Brent Coleman

We were excited to go on the trip with our grandmother and great-grandfather, but we weren't so excited about having to pack up our used toilet paper, yuck!

Chelsey liked the mule pack station, and still remembers all the mules' names: Doc, Mabel, Pepper, Moonshine, and Baldy. She said the mules had really pretty eyes. One mule was itchy and scratched against the tree, then gave Brent a "head-butt".

Our camp kitchen with the flat rock table was really funny. It had rock chairs all around it and it had bricks across it. The meals were delicious. We ate mashed potatoes with broccoli and cheese, oatmeal and cream of wheat, crackers with cheese and peanut butter, and trail snacks.

The hikes were very long, but they were fun.

We really liked all of the different kinds of animals we saw. When we were hiking up to lakes #4 and #5, we watched a marmot go into its home. We also saw a marmot near our happy hour feast,

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Fred K & Teresa (standing),
Christine, Chelsey, & Brent
at Cottonwood Lake 5

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on a rock. It cheeped at us, smelled our food then ran to it's home under a tree next to us.

We had fun catching frogs near Muir Lake. Almost every day, Chelsey and Brent went wading in the frog pond. When we were trying to catch a frog, he went into the lake and all of his body except his eyes was covered in foam. We got to help Yvonne fill her sun shower, and after that Brent tried to catch a tadpole with a cup, but it didn't work because they were too fast. Brent did catch a spider in his tent.

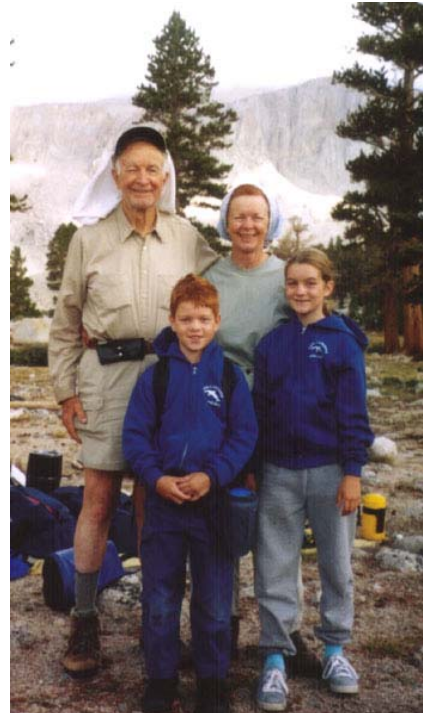
We saw three deer and Chelsey tried to take a picture of them, but some how they weren't there when we got the pictures back.

Chelsey liked finding rocks. We found a giant quartz rock, which we brought home. Chelsey also found a Red Flicker feather and a slingshot that we set down somewhere and forgot to bring home.

Cottonwood Lake #5 was Chelsey's favorite, because it was pretty. Brent liked Cirque Lake, and we ate our lunch there: peanut butter crackers. We took a lot of pictures of the lakes and squirrels. Brent still has a couple pictures left to take in his camera.

We had fun skipping rocks, and Chelsey skipped her rock ten times (half of Daddy's record). Brent skipped his rock seven times.

Even though we had a long drive getting there, did too much hiking, and got tired of eating peanut butter, we really had a great time on the mule pack trip.



Brent & Chelsey with James and Peggy

Our Southern California Forests

Most of us spend many happy hours hiking in the mountains and forests of southern California, and now is the time to speak up to protect these areas that we enjoy. The Forest Service has released their draft management plan for the four national forests in our local mountains. They are asking for public comments on this plan and will accept our input until August 11, 2004. Of the six alternative management plans that were studied, the Forest Service has selected #2 for the Cleveland National Forest and #4 for the Angeles, San Bernadino and Los Padres National Forests as their preferred alternatives. They also state that public input will shape the plan that is finally adopted in the summer of 2005.

The Sierra Club has endorsed Alternative #6, a plan developed in conjunction with the Center for Biological Diversity and other environmental groups. This plan emphasizes protection of the natural character of the forest and enhancement of low impact recreational use. The Forest Service proposed alternatives, #2 and #4, will open more roads and trails to motorized usage and provide less emphasis on maintaining natural habitat than alternative #6. Plans #2 & #4 call for intensive levels of management control to offset the adverse effects, but personnel to control current levels of harmful activities are not available.

Please take the time to review the Forest Service plans and send in your comments. Relating your comments to a specific area or region that you have used adds considerably to your input. All of the materials are available on-line at www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr. The volume of material may initially seem daunting, but these interactive materials allow you to make comments directly on line, highlighting the appropriate section that you are discussing. There is a useful search feature that will identify sections that relate to any key word that you enter and then take you directly to that section. Comments can also be mailed to

Southern California Forest Plan Revision
(Name of National Forest)
USDA Forest Service Content Analysis Center
P.O. Box 22777
Salt Lake City, UT 84122

Background material and suggested comments are available at www.sierraclub.org/ca/socalforests. You can email questions to John Monson at john.monson@sierraclub.org.

Copies of an LA Times editorial "Speak Up for the Forest" and specific suggestions for the Cleveland National Forest are available via email from the editor of the Mule Pack newsletter (kaiser@pulsco.com).



Hiking to Army Pass

ANGELES CHAPTER, SIERRA CLUB



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