



Mule Pack Section



Spring 2005

Annual Newsletter

MULE PACK

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In This Issue

Trip reporters are needed! This issue has only one report submitted from our 2004 trips. If you attend one of the 2005 trips, please volunteer to send in a report. This can be as simple as a few pictures or a paragraph or two giving your impression of the trips. If you feel moved to elaborate in a longer article, we will welcome that as well.

The Forest Service draft EIS has been released. This document identifies options for Trail and Commercial Pack Stock Management in the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses. They are accepting public input until June 15, 2005. These rules will have a significant impact on future trips sponsored by the Mule Pack Section. Refer to the article lower on this page. The 2005 trips will be under the same rules as those in 2004.

Five trips are planned for 2005. For those who prefer long-weekend trips, Dave Cross and Christine Gutierrez have planned two trips to Yosemite Park. The first one opens the mule pack season in late June and provides you with a rare opportunity to visit the Hetch-Hetchy

area. They also close our season with a trip going out of Tuolumne Meadows to Sunrise Lakes with a planned hike to Cloud's Rest.

The other three trips last a full-week. Sandy Burnside & Sandy Sperling have organized a trip to Garnet Lake in the Ansel Adams Wilderness. This location provides excellent access to this popular area with a shorter entrance hike than most trips into the area.

Dan Butler decided that a five-day trip to Big Pine Lakes in 2004 did not provide enough time to fully explore the area and has scheduled a full-week for 2005. Visit the Palisade Glacier – the largest in the Sierras – and explore the beauty of the turquoise lakes and the spires of Palisade Crest.

The 2004 Charlotte Creek trip was called off when a number of individuals cancelled, but the packer agreed to carry over our deposit to 2005. Yvonne Tsai will lead this trip giving us a second opportunity to visit Charlotte Dome, Vidette Meadows, the Kearsarge

Forest Service Management Plan—Inyo and Sierra NF

In April, the Forest Service released the draft EIS for the Trail and Commercial Pack Stock Management plans in the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses. This is a court-ordered study of the cumulative impacts of commercial operations and it has been combined with a trail management study. The documents describe five management alternatives and identifies alternative number 3 as the preferred plan. They are accepting public input until June 15, 2005 and state that the final plan will be influenced by the public input. The final report is scheduled for late 2005.

We encourage you to review the alternatives and provide input to the Forest Service. This can be done by letter or directly on line. Full details of the management plan can

(Continued on page 4)

2005 Mule Pack Trips

Jun 17-20 Fri-Mon Mule Pack

O: Backpack without a Pack in Hetch Hetchy High Country: Hired packers carry our gear while we hike separately with only daypacks. Fri morning hike 9 mi / 2000' gain to Tiltill Valley campsite (6000' elevation), passing by numerous dramatic waterfalls in full early-season flow. Sat/Sun optional moderate+ dayhikes to area peaks overlooking Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne, or glacier formed moraines and chain of lakes. Mon hike out. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. To reserve send 2 SASEs, SC#, requested info & \$190 check to Ldr: Dave Cross, Ass't: Christine Gutierrez

Jul 31-Aug 6 Sun-Sat Mule Pack

O/I: Garnet Lake, 9700': Sun morning hike from Agnew Meadows Pack Station (8335'), 7 mi., 2500' gain to camp at beautiful Garnet Lake. Mules will carry max 55# per person. Spend 5 days exploring, fishing, swimming, and enjoying the scenery. Sat hike out, perhaps by different route. There is \$14/person entry fee at Minaret Summit. Trip limit 12. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. Send 2 SASEs (email can substitute for one) with requested info & \$250 check to Co-Ldr: Sandy Sperling. Email questions to Co-Ldr: Sandy Burnside

Aug 14—20 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 your gear to a scenic base camp by Charlotte Creek. Five full layover

days to hike, explore, photo, fish, and enjoy nature. Sat hike out. Limit 12. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. Send 2 SASE with requested info and \$250 check to Ldr: Yvonne Tsai, Co-Ldrs: John Kaiser, Sandy Burnside

Aug 26 - Sep 1 Fri-Thu 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, 3100' gain to campsite at gorgeous mixture of lakes, meadows, glaciers, & mountains. From our campsite (10,850') we can see two ~13,000' peaks, with other 14,000 footers in the area. Sat—Wed hike, photo, fish, enjoy scenery, or relax in camp and enjoy the Mule Pack Section's famous happy hours. Thursday hike out. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. Send requested info via email if possible to Co-Ldr: Laura Joseph; On acceptance send 2 SASEs (if no email) & \$160 check to Laura Joseph; Ldr: Dan Butler

Sep 2-5 Fri-Mon Mule Pack

O: Hike Tuolumne Meadows to Clouds Rest (with a little help from our Mules): Hired packers

carry gear while we hike separately carrying just daypacks from Tuolumne Meadows. Fri morning hike 5 mi, 1200' gain to our camp in the Sunrise Lakes area. Spend the weekend enjoying the beautiful area, including a planned hike to the top of Clouds Rest. Many say that this provides the most stunning view of the Valley from above. Mon hike out. Note reservation/cancellation policy below. Send 2 SASEs with requested info & \$240 check to Co-Ldr: Dave Cross; Co-Ldr: Christine Gutierrez



Big Pine Fifth Lake & Palisade Glacier

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.

2005 Mule Pack Trips, cont.

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White Heather
A High Sierra Jewel

We're on the Web

Each year the Mule Pack trips for the following summer are announced in December by posting them on the Angeles Chapter website:

www.angeles.sierraclub.org/mps

You can also download copies of this and previous newsletters in pdf format.

Our Southern California Forests

Thanks for your response to last year's call for input to the draft management plan for the four Southern California National Forests.

Later this summer the Forest Service will publish their decision and we will have another opportunity to provide input to the Forest Service expressing support where due and requesting changes where warranted.

You can easily monitor developments and get additional information through the website for the Sierra Club's Forest Campaign:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/ca/socalforests/>

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:

John Kaiser
20592 Minerva Lane
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714-968-4677 or jkai39@earthlink.net

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".

Management Plan, cont.

(Continued from page 1)

be accessed on the web at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/inyo/projects/wildplan2004.shtml>. Chapter 2 describes the various alternatives in detail. A very brief and incomplete discussion is included below.

Two of the plans, **Alternatives 1 and 4** are based on annual Service Day quotas which are the basis of the system that has been in effect since 2001. This system places an annual quota on the number of people who are provided service and places daily trailhead quotas on every trail, but the 2001 plan did not place quotas on stock use; on some trails commercial operators have a separate quota and on other trails, the pack stations and individuals are competing for the same spots. According to the FS documents (Chapter 3), the average full service trip uses 10 stock for every 4 people and the dunnage-drop & spot trips average 10 stock for every 6 people (dunnage drops use less than spot trips). In comparison, the Mule Pack Section trips typically have only 5 or 6 stock for 10 to 15 people. The Forest Service acknowledges that since the start of this Service Day system in 2001 that the ratio of the pack stock to people has actually increased. The reason? Under this system, it is economically difficult for the packers to support trips with groups who use relatively few pack stock because these trips use a large portion of their annual quota; under the traditional pricing based on the number of pack stock not enough income was produced to justify supporting the trips. As a result the pack stations have artificially increased rates on such groups and this has led to some users deciding to use more stock since they were being charged extra anyway.

Alternative 2 eliminates the Service Day quota and replaces it with destination trip quotas. A trip is defined as a one-way service. Although trips that use less than 5 stock will count as only 1/2 trip, it does not remove the basic problem that the packers will find it difficult to support larger groups that use few pack stock.

Alternative 5 allows no commercial operations at all. Enough said.

The FS preferred **Alternative 3** uses a fairly complex combination of daily trailhead quotas, and seasonal limits on both stock and clients, along with trip quotas to some destinations. The FS states that it provides the most flexibility of the alternatives. While it does seem to be a positive step, the seasonal limit on clients seems unnecessary and redundant with the daily trailhead quotas, group size limits, and destination trip limits that will control the number of people that use commercial services to enter the wilderness.

The seasonal client limit may lead to the same problem that the Service Days have: groups with small numbers of stock are placed at a disadvantage at a time when the FS should be encouraging such trips. The group size limit would return to 15 under alternative 3. But the daily trailhead quotas on some trails would be less than the group size limits, e.g., Kear-sarge, Laurel, Walton, & Fernandez would have a daily quota of 8, just to name several that this writer has used. It is unclear how this will be handled under Alternative 3. In the current 2001 management plan, "split quotas" (borrowing from succeeding days) have been allowed to increase the group size while still maintaining overall usage at the levels desired by the FS.

We encourage you to look at all the details on the web: campfire regulations, grazing management, and trail management are some of the items discussed. Most of all send your comments to the Forest Service:

Trail and Commercial Pack Stock Draft EIS
Inyo National Forest
351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200
Bishop, CA 93514

or enter them directly on-line.

Possible comment (please personalize):

I have participated in many dunnage-drop trips in which the use ratio is 6 stock to 12 people instead of the current average of 10 stock to 6 people. The current 2001 management plan actually makes it economically difficult for pack stations to support such trips. This is the likely reason that the ratio of stock to people has increased since 2001. Your new management plan should encourage more trips with low numbers of stock and fewer trips using large numbers of stock for relatively few people. The elimination of Service Day quotas in your preferred alternative is a step in the right direction.

However, Alternative 3 should be simplified by removing the seasonal client threshold which seems unnecessary when group size limits, trailhead quotas, and destination trip quotas are in place to limit the number of people entering the wilderness. The seasonal client limits may well lead to the same difficulty as the Service Day quotas and make it more difficult for packers to support groups that use very few stock.

Some trails have very low trailhead quotas in Alternative 3, and the Alternative does not discuss whether split quotas will be permitted on these trails. I urge you to permit this practice.

2004 Trip Report

Lake Genevieve

July 25-31, 2004

Leaders: John Kaiser, Yvonne Tsai, & Sandy Burnside

Submitted by Sandy Sperling

Twelve happy hikers left their gear at the McGee Creek Mule Pack Station the night before commencing our trip. We were especially happy since the mules would be carrying most of our stuff. We con-

gregated the following morning at the backpackers lot by Convict Lake, which would be our exit point.

Most of us already knew each other, as we were all experienced mule pack trippers. The participants were: Keith Burnside, Winnette Butler, Sam Donley, Laura Joseph, Bob Mullens, Nancy Quam-Wickham, Bill Rowland, Rich Rowland, and Sandy Sperling. We piled ourselves and our daypacks into three 4WD SUVs and headed for the Laurel Pass trailhead a short distance north on 395 and then west on a very bumpy dirt & rock road. Yvonne: "Calling it a road is a generous statement." Bob: "The 4WD access will not soon be forgotten." The mules were not to be as fortunate, having to carry our supplies from the horse (excuse me, *mule*) trailer lot within sight of 395.

Sandy Burnside led us up the maintained trail, with numerous switchbacks, to the saddle between Bloody Mountain and Laurel Peak. We then continued down and across an interesting barren depression, or bowl, before climbing up the opposite side where we got some nice views, first of Convict Lake, and then our new home for the week, beautiful Lake Genevieve. We continued to follow the trail past Lake Edith down to the campsite by Lake Genevieve, near the inlet. What a beautiful



First view of Lake Genevieve
Sandy, Keith & Sandy pause at the overlook

spot!

We were there a short time before the mules arrived. We eagerly took our gear and began the nesting process, setting up tents, mattresses, bags, kitchens, and determining the all important happy hour area. The shower was "installed" up the hill out of sight, with nice flat granite rocks for floor tiles. We filtered water and got everything ready to go.

Monday morning we left as a group toward Lake Dorothy and beyond. Yes, it seems that almost all the beautiful lakes in this area were named after women, with names that were popular in another era. However, we did pass Lake Wit-So-Nah-Pah (I'm not making this up!), which we hoped was not a woman's name. Most of us continued to Lake Constance. We looked up at Red Slate Mountain, which some from the group had climbed last year. Impossible from this side, at

least if you don't want more than class 3.

The wildflowers were putting on quite a show for us. Yvonne: "My fondest memories are the beautiful wildflowers, such as the White Heather and the pretty columbines. They recharge me with energy and joy."



Lake Dorothy

Tuesday, we again left as a group, this time to Cloverleaf Lake, but had some smaller groups splinter off. Most of us continued to Bunny Lake. Sandy B and Laura headed toward Bloody Pass to scout potential routes for climbing Bloody Mtn the next day. Some hung out at Cloverleaf and Keith tried his fishing rod. One of his best memories is how he easily

(Continued on page 6)

2004 Trip Report

(Continued from page 5)

caught his limit whenever he tried. He treated us to trout at two happy hours.

Wednesday was the day set aside for climbing

Bloody, named for the color of its rock. Sandy B and Laura had determined it was possible to climb up the south facing talus to attain the southwest ridge which would take us to the summit. It worked, and led to the most mentioned memories for the group. Here is Rich's account: Wednesday dawned bright and clear, and I joined 7 of our group (Sandy & Keith B, Sandy S, Bob, Wynnette, Nancy, and Laura) in an attempt to "bag" the peak of Bloody Mtn (12,552'). The southwest shoulder of the peak looked easy from a distance, and we easily reached the base of its south flank.

But there we were confronted by a somewhat daunting-looking set of rockfall chutes, which Keith and Sandy S immediately headed for. After some deliberation I started up one of the chutes behind Laura, looking out for occasional bouncing rocks from above. After a slow, arduous, careful climb I reached the top of the chute. However, even on the top of the shoulder ridge the slope angle still made for a slow patient climb (for me). (Sandy S appeared to bound to the top without difficulty.) I was rewarded for slogging to the top by a splendid 360 degree view. We decided to return via the less hazardous, gently sloping northeast shoulder of the mountain. Near the end of that shoulder I followed Bob and Sandy S for what looked like a quick glissade on loose scree down a steep linear swale. However, the swale (or "chute") contained bedrock patches and the scree was not always loose, so my descent became slower than planned. Fortunately, all 8 of us summited and returned to base camp in good shape.

And here is Nancy's story: My most



Wynnette relaxes at Cloverleaf Lake
Bloody Mtn awaits the Wednesday adventure

memorable part of the trip was hiking & scrambling up Bloody Mtn with Wynnette. (The two of us were way below the rest of the group.) We struggled up the gulch. I let her go ahead on the steepest part. She was kicking loose shale down, so I went climbing

straight up some rock formations, then kept getting myself stuck above her, having to inch my way laterally to find a crevice up. Then we got up through the gully, rested at the point on the nose of Bloody where you can look down, and Wynnette told me her knee was "not very good." We thought about going down, but the prospect was far less encouraging than just kicking our own butts up. I ran out of water by the time I got to the top, and was dripping with sweat. Gawd, we hiked that morning like a couple of one-

lung invalids!

Bob: Bloody Mtn was a memorable grunt.

That same day, John and Yvonne hiked to Bright Dot Lake. This was John's favorite hike because of the variety of the scenery: rock gardens, meadows, Yosemite toads, sweeping views of Mildred Lake valley and Baldwin ridge, the sound of the falls from Lake Wit-So-Nah-Pah, the foundation of a miner's cabin, and the multi-colored rocks.

At happy hour that night, most of us feeling a "good tired," we discovered that all twelve of us were introverts! The next day called for hiking in pairs after being in groups the previous four days. We all needed some "alone time." Several of us took John's suggestion and hiked to Bright Dot Lake, others to nearby lakes, and some stayed in camp.

The happy hours were fun with lots of good food, usually turning into "happy dinners" (or Happy Meals?). John and Keith made



Red Slate and Wit-So-Nah-Pah Creek

(Continued on page 7)

2004 Trip Report



Baldwin Ridge & Mildred Lake Valley ; View from Genevieve—Dorothy Trail

quesadillas one night and Winnette brought an avocado and made guacamole. Sandy Sperling made quesadillas to order another night. We had perfect weather the entire week. The mosquitoes made themselves known, but the bites didn't itch much. We couldn't have campfires as we were camping at 10,000', but we had a candle lantern, an electric lantern, and burned some "mosquito sticks" that smelled similar to a contraband substance. Sandy Burnside said this is the first mule pack trip where she stayed up past 8:30 pm (but, of course, that only happened once!).

On Friday, most of the group headed toward Pretty Pass. Yvonne: "It should really be named 'Ugly Pass.' But I enjoyed it very much since I finally got to do some good rock scrambling and a few dicey moves to get out of some tight spots. Three of us reached the 11,900' pass and saw this beautiful sunflower-like plant beaming at us."

And Laura's version: "The hike to "Pretty (Ugly) Pass: There were six of us who started out. Several folks quit when we arrived at the base of the Pass and looked up a sheer rocky, loose chute--actually two chutes. Bob, whose lousy idea this was, opted for the right hand chute. I believed (correctly as it turned out) that the correct pass was the one at the top of the left chute, but Yvonne and I followed Bob in continuing to attempt this suicidal mission. As if the chute was not bad enough, when Bob reached the top he realized that this was not, in fact, the Pass and that it was necessary to cross this knife edge

ridge to get to the correct (left) chute. Bob and Yvonne had no problem with this (Yvonne is a rock climber). I followed Yvonne step for step and resumed breathing only after we reached the flat rock that crowns 'Pretty Pass'. There really is nothing pretty about it".

Meanwhile, Keith and the Sandies returned to the Laurel Lake trailhead and continued on to Laurel Lakes. This was our favorite lunch spot, on the "other" side of Bloody Mtn. Sandy S went for a memorable swim in Lake Genevieve after this hike. The water was pretty cold, so the "swim" only lasted a few minutes—then out to the sun shower!

All good things must come to an end. Saturday morning we piled our duffle high for the mules to pick up and haul out. Our route took us by Mildred Lake and then we followed its outlet all the way down to Convict Lake. The trail was washed out in a cou-



Crossing Convict Creek

ple of places, but safe passage was easily made. We were all glad that we were going *down* this way rather than up, as there was considerable loss in elevation and the trip was considerably farther than our route to Genevieve from the Laurel Lakes trailhead. The drivers all had to get out faster than the rest so we could retrieve our vehicles at the initial trailhead. Then we met the group at Tom's Place for a memorable post mule-pack meal. The mules finally arrived back at the pack station at 8:15 pm, and then we headed south. What a memorable trip! Most of us have great photos to prove it!



View of Red Slate Mtn from Bright Dot Trail

ANGELES CHAPTER, SIERRA CLUB



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