

AZ621(WR-RCH)

February 14, 1986

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Western Region
ACTING
From: Superintendent, Yosemite
Subject: Superintendent's Annual Report

Enclosed is the Superintendent's Annual Report for 1985. Please note the timeliness of our report.

(Sgd.) James O. Laney

James O. Laney

Enclosure

bc: Lisa Dapprich
Karen Donaldson
Research Library

Superintendent's Annual Report
Yosemite National Park
1985

Park Highlights for 1985

The Return of Light fund raising campaign was officially launched with a press conference in January. The campaign name was later changed to the Yosemite Fund.

A Denmark visitor was stabbed to death while hiking between Mirror Lake and the Ahwahnee Hotel. The homicide has not yet been solved.

The Tioga Road at Olmsted Point was covered with 3,700 pounds of cinders in an experimental program to expedite snow melt on the trans-Sierra highway.

April 22 marked the first anniversary of the death of Ansel Adams and the official naming of Mount Ansel Adams.

The California State Lands Commission, after holding public hearings, recommended that the National Park Service retrocede exclusive federal jurisdiction in Wawona, Section 35, to concurrent civil jurisdiction.

A plan to restrict auto access into the eastern end of Yosemite Valley during peak holiday and summer weekends was announced.

The Teamsters Union went on strike against the Yosemite Park and Curry Company on May 18, affecting some services in the park. The strike was settled on May 26, and the Teamsters reported back to work on May 28.

A female camper was stabbed at the top of Yosemite Falls June 18. A suspect was apprehended and the victim was taken to a nearby hospital in stable condition.

A major wildland fire broke out in the Pate Valley area east of Hetch Hetchy on July 1. The fire reached 1600 acres before it was contained.

A rockslide closed the Yosemite Falls trail on July 20, damaging approximately 50 feet of trail.

Two people were killed and three injured as a result of being struck by lightning on Half Dome on July 27.

The Governor of California visited Yosemite on August 16 and 17 and observed the California Conservation Corps work in the park.

A man and woman were observed falling or jumping off Glacier Point on August 17. Circumstances of the fatalities are still unknown.

A dual dedication took place in Tuolumne Meadows to celebrate the naming of Mount Ansel Adams and to recognize the designation of Yosemite as a World Heritage Site on August 24. A number of dignitaries

were in attendance including Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel, Director of the National Park Service William Penn Mott, Actor Robert Redford, Senator Alan Cranston, Friends of the Earth President David Brower, and noted author Wallace Stegner.

The hydroelectric plant and penstock in Yosemite Valley were permanently shut down on August 26 to concur with Service-wide policy.

On September 13 and 14, Director William Penn Mott toured the park with DSC park planners and spoke to the Yosemite Association annual members meeting in Tuolumne Meadows.

On September 21, a tree limb fell on an open-air tram tour, killing two visitors and injuring 12 others.

On November 25, Federal Court Judge Edward E. Price, presiding over the United States District Court in Fresno, dismissed the Yosemite Tenants Association suit against the Secretary of the Interior due to failure of the Tenants Association to prosecute the case.

Director-General of the National Trust in England visited the park on November 21 and 22.

Each division reported the following:

Archeology

The staff of the Yosemite Archeology Office conducted over 120 archeological consultations for proposed maintenance and construction projects during 1985. Archeological clearance surveys, data searches, and limited subsurface surveys were conducted for 58 projects resulting in clearance documentation through 56 categorical exclusions, 12 archeological clearance reports, and two environmental assessments.

Eight major archeological projects were conducted in Yosemite during 1985 in direct support of various planning, design, and construction projects being conducted by the Denver Service Center.

In total, these archeological investigations within Yosemite surveyed approximately 35 miles of road corridor while recording 74 previously unrecorded sites. Test excavations were conducted at 21 prehistoric sites. Consultations with design staff allowed for the avoidance of all significant cultural resource areas during construction.

Two special archeological projects were conducted in Yosemite during 1985: Reconnaissance of the Deep Canyon area and the archeological survey of Lake Eleanor. The survey of Lake Eleanor was the first systematic project conducted of the area, as the Lake Eleanor Dam was constructed in 1914. The lake was fully drained during the fall to make repairs to the dam, allowing an emergency "below lake level" survey of the entire area. A total of 29 prehistoric and historic archeological sites were recorded and mapped prior to refilling of the reservoir.

Research

During 1985, work was accomplished on three existing projects and initiated on two new projects. Progress on the backcountry carrying capacity project was marked by an article on the methodology used to determine interim capacities and by the coding of a new conceptual model in the DYNAMO simulation language. An article on the QUOTA trailhead model was also accepted for publication.

Articles on the role of fire in the Yosemite wilderness, correlation of woody and duff moisture contents, and the use of fusee dropper ignition devices were published. Fuels data were transferred to the computer for analysis.

The geographic information system (GIS) project proceeded on schedule with one theme verified, eight themes completed, eight themes under construction, and two themes in preparation. Considerable time was spent classifying vegetation data. This effort will be postponed until an on-site computer becomes available. The justification for the purchase of this computer is in the Washington Office awaiting approval.

In September, a great grey owl study was initiated by NPS scientists at the University of California, Davis. Close coordination of this project was accomplished during a two-day visit to the park.

Funds for the bighorn sheep reintroduction study became available. Necessary procurement and hiring procedures were followed so that the study can begin when the sheep are reintroduced in February 1986.

Interpretation

Implementation of ADP equipment immensely strengthened the efficiency and effectiveness of the Interpretive Division's management, administrative, information, and statistical functions. A financial management program was developed by the division's Administrative Assistant and adopted by the Superintendent for park-wide use and later by the regional office.

A computerized backcountry users' quiz was installed in the Valley Visitor Center.

Phase I of the park's Wayside Exhibit Plan was approved and implemented; the Phase II draft was completed.

A 20-year cooperative agreement with the Yosemite Institute, prepared by division staff, was signed in May.

A modular exhibit on park management history was produced, and a new peregrine falcon exhibit was developed for the Valley Visitor Center.

A 24-minute 16mm. film on Yosemite's bear management program, produced entirely by the park's AV Specialist, was completed in May and has been shown extensively since then.

A new Traveler's Information Station was installed in Yosemite Valley as a component of the park's Traffic Control Plan.

The Yosemite Association and the Sequoia Natural History Association jointly published "Discovering Sierra Birds" in August.

Interior restoration of Bagby Station at the El Portal Travel Museum began in the fall in anticipation of relocating the Yosemite Association offices to that building. Completion is expected in February 1986.

The new Lower River Campground Amphitheater was completed and opened for public programs in June.

Deaf Awareness Days in July drew attention to Yosemite's accessibility and interpretive programs for hearing-impaired visitors.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the American Indian Council of Mariposa County and the National Park Service was written and signed.

A roving van was back on the road daily during the summer and contacted 9,018 visitors.

Hill's Studio underwent major restoration. The exterior was restored to original condition; the interior will be completed in spring of 1986.

A new interpretive brochure for the Mariposa Grove was published.

An "Old Fashioned Christmas" at the Pioneer Yosemite History Center was immensely successful, as was a sunset tram tour to Wawona Point.

Eight new exhibits were installed at Parsons Lodge at Tuolumne Meadows.

Several innovative new and remodeled programs were offered throughout Mather District. Significant increases occurred in visitor participation in interpretive activities and in contacts at the Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center and Big Oak Flat Information Station, resulting in a record number of visitor contacts for the district.

More than 100 press releases, public service announcements, and feature articles were written and distributed to local and national media on park activities with emphasis on new programs and policies.

More than 2,000 radio, television, and newspaper interviews were handled by the Public Affairs Office with special emphasis on creating a positive image of Yosemite and the National Park Service. The Superintendent and Chief Park Interpreter were interviewed for tele-

vision approximately 15 times, and both participated in a radio talk show on KCBS in San Francisco in March. All three major television networks covered stories in the park in 1985.

The Public Affairs Officer established the first weekly recreation reports with radio stations KFI in Los Angeles and KMJ in Fresno.

The first draft of a professional museum catalog for the Schwabacher basket collection was written; photo documentation was completed.

A new design concept plan for an expanded Indian Cultural Museum was completed by an exhibit contractor and approved by NPS.

A total of 126 new accessions, including 70 donations, were recorded in 1985.

NPS National Catalog submissions in 1985 totaled 2,385 records.

A video public service announcement publicizing services available for hearing-impaired visitors was produced.

Major donations to the Yosemite Fund in 1985 exceeded \$1.1 million. Major contributors included YP&CC (\$500,000), American Savings Charitable Foundation (\$150,000), Dean Witter Foundation (\$60,000), the Goldman Foundation (\$30,000), and Byron and Elvira Nishkian (\$200,000).

The donor wall to acknowledge contributors to the Yosemite Fund was developed and placed outside the Valley Visitor Center, donor names have yet to be recorded on it.

The Yosemite Renaissance, a major exhibition of contemporary Yosemite-theme paintings, was on display in the Valley Visitor Center October 15 through the end of the year. More than a year in the planning, organization, and jurying stages, the show attracted many entries.

Interpretive staff members developed and coordinated six three-day training courses in ADP applications and computer operations for park personnel. Both basic and advanced courses were offered.

The Yosemite Park and Curry Company produced interpretive "trivia" cards for hotel guests and restaurant patrons.

Concessions Management

The Division of Concessions Management was actively involved in contract renewal negotiations with the Yosemite Park and Curry Company, Yosemite Medical Group, El Portal Market, and the Ansel Adams Gallery.

The contract renewal was completed with the Yosemite Medical group during 1985. The renewal process for Ansel Adams Gallery and El Portal Market will be completed during 1986. Contract negotiation with the Yosemite Park and Curry Company is expected to extend through mid-1987.

Maintenance

A total of 900 feet of bike trail was constructed, connecting the present bike path near Curry Village to the Happy Isles Road. This project added to the nine miles of bike trail in Yosemite Valley.

Tioga Pass was plowed and opened to traffic on May 8 and closed for the season on November 12.

The new Cascades Bridge, constructed by Jentz Construction Company, was completed in October.

A causeway trail was completed through Rafferty Meadows to prevent erosion to the meadow. This has been an ongoing project for three seasons.

Three NPS cabins in Tuolumne Meadows were reconstructed along with related utilities.

One tent was removed from Hodgdon Meadows seasonal residential area and replaced with a modular unit.

One mile of trail was constructed from Happy Isles Shuttle Bus stop to intersect with the trail system above the present water storage tank to bypass the road and alignment of the new water system presently being installed in this area. The project is 85% complete.

Two 18-person CCC crews assisted trail and maintenance crews in the backcountry and construction of sewer systems at May Lake and Merced Lake.

A 16-person YCC crew worked on numerous projects in the park from June 26 through August 17.

A new sewage treatment plant is currently being constructed at Wawona and is scheduled for completion during the fall of 1986.

A new water treatment plant, storage facility and main lines being constructed at Wawona and should be completed in 1987.

A water storage facility, main lines, and well are presently being constructed in Yosemite Valley.

A new water treatment plant facility was constructed at Tuolumne Meadows and will go on line the summer of 1986.

Electric power extension at Tuolumne Meadows was completed to the sewer sprayfield.

The leach field at Badger Pass was rehabilitated.

Ten tent cabins were removed from Wawona.

Safety

Progress is continually being made in establishing a comprehensive Loss Control Management Program for Yosemite.

Visitor Protection

Backcountry. The total backcountry use nights for 1985 was 111,390, compared to 111,783 in 1984 (figures do not include use nights at the High Sierra Camps). The wilderness permit compliance for 1984 was 96.4%.

The Backcountry Unit patrolled 6,054 trail miles during the period May through September (the equivalent of eight times the number of miles in the entire trail system).

The winter nordic rangers skied 2,282 miles, contacted 15,800 nordic skiers, participated in 20 search and rescue efforts and 84 medical assists. All ski trails were patrolled at least once by each member of the nordic staff. The Glacier Point cabin was staffed during all winter weekends.

Search and Rescue. There were 187 reported search and rescue incidents involving a total effort of 16,493 manhours and costing a total of \$379,415. These figures are dramatic increases over the statistics of previous years.

Wildland Fire Summary.

	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>
Natural fires	20	23
Management fires	3	3
Total man-caused fires	49	46
Percent of total fires	48.5%	43.4%

Mather District. The City and County of San Francisco continued to respond to Mather District's efforts to assist the park. They agreed to fund a major campground at Hetch Hetchy, with construction costs totally \$540,700. In addition, the City and County of San Francisco provided assistance in a number of park areas in the amount of \$168,000.

Valley District. A wintertime campground fee collection system was implemented for the first time in the Valley campgrounds.

The El Portal ambulance operation was transferred from J.C. Fremont Hospital to the National Park Service.

The district staff prepared and submitted draft law enforcement and fire regulations for the El Portal Administrative Site.

The El Portal Ranger Office was moved to the El Portal Hotel fronting

Highway 140 with the goal of offering the public a more accommodating and accessible contact point.

The Arch Rock Entrance Station was staffed on an eight hour day, seven day a week basis during the off season, for the first time in six years.

Major incidents: Olsbro homicide, March 16; stabbing/attempted murder at top of Yosemite Falls, June 16; double fatality on Half Dome, July 27; homicide/suicide off Glacier Point, August 17; dignitary visit by the Governor of California, August 16; and double fatality-tram accident, September 21.

Wawona District. There were 342 hang gliding flights in 1985 from Glacier Point. Badger Pass Ski area closed for the season on April 7 and reopened on November 16.

The NPS retroceded partial concurrent civil jurisdiction over Section 35 to the State of California on August 8. The district has worked with Mariposa County, the Solicitor's Office, and Section 35 homeowners to develop a draft Memorandum of Understanding for management of Section 35 under concurrent civil jurisdiction.

The U.S. District Court decision on the Vagim case (U.S. vs. 2.61 acres, Wawona Village) was reversed on appeal by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, and has been remanded to the District Court for retrial. The reversal was based upon the District Court's refusal to allow the defendants to present evidence in the case. A new trial date has not yet been set.

Resources Management

Bighorn Sheep. The Inyo National Forest Supervisor approved the plan that would permit the reintroduction of bighorn sheep into Lee Vining Canyon when alternative grazing lands became available for relocation of the domestic sheep. The Forest Service was actively pursuing alternative grazing lands when the Yosemite Association, with funding support from the Goldman Fund and the Sacramento Safari Club, reached a financial agreement with the sheepherder to relinquish his grazing rights. The Inyo National Forest then allocated the Lee Vining Canyon Grazing Allotment to bighorn sheep. The reintroduction is scheduled for February 1986. The Park Service has funding to conduct the follow-up research to document reintroduction success. If the transplant fails, it will determine why so corrective actions may be taken. If successful, it will also develop a long term monitoring strategy for the Resource Management Staff to use.

Human/Bear Management Program. There were 261 bear incidents reported in Yosemite in 1985. These incidents represented \$16,415 in property damage. Two visitors sustained minor injuries from bears. There were a total of 31 bears captured, 15 of which were translocated within the Park, with the remaining 16 released at the site of capture. Three

bears had to be destroyed this year because they became a threat to visitor safety. The installation of food lockers in Tuolumne Meadows campground was completed this year.

Peregrine Falcons. Yosemite supports the only two known nesting pairs in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. This small population appears to be very unstable, requiring constant monitoring and nest manipulation to insure reproductive success. Although the pair in the north end of the park successfully fledged four young without management assistance, the pair in Yosemite Valley laid four eggs with severe pesticide contamination. Embryos in two of the four eggs died during the incubation process due to pesticide poisoning. Two eggs were successfully hatched in an incubator at the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group and later released to the wild. Management actions were taken on the Yosemite Valley nest anticipating a problem and two young were fledged. Funding is still not available to support this important work. The majority of the costs are covered by the Santa Cruz Predatory Research Group.

Mule Deer. We have continued to work closely with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the California Department of Fish and Game in cooperatively managing the Yosemite and Tuolumne Deer herds. Fawn ratios are down this year, but indications are that it may be artificial due to a large yearling cohort. Another year of monitoring is necessary to tell. Buck to doe ratios are still below the target values set by the four agencies. All agencies involved agree and are requesting that the shortened season of last year be continued again this year, for the regular hunting season in zone D-6 where the two herds are hunted on non-park lands.

Fisheries Management. Yosemite continued to stock exotic rainbow trout in seven high country lakes again this year. All of the 880 miles of streams and 129 of the park's 319 lakes maintain viable populations of exotic fish for recreational purposes.

Natural and Prescribed Fire Management. Twenty-two natural fires burned 3,635.65 acres. The season's first natural fire crossed into the fire suppression zone and was contained. Lightning storms between July 27 and August 6 ignited numerous natural fires, fourteen of which required constant monitoring. The largest fire was 1,146 acres. Three prescribed fires, totaling 137 acres were burned on Studhorse Flat as certification exercises for three trainee burn bosses. In early September, the park received precipitation 7 out of 9 days, which interfered with planned prescribed burns; 2,067 acres of the proposed 8,022 acres were burned. Burn units PW23 and PW24, near Wawona, were burned in late September. Fuels were reduced by about 63 percent over 1,450 acres. Burn unit PW12 east of Half Dome was ignited on October 29; 480 acres were burned in 10 days. Cost per acre for large prescribed burns fell this year due to reduced unit preparation needs for PW23 and PW24, and burn strategy for unit PW12. Unit PW12 cost only \$6.40 per acre--the least expensive prescribed burn conducted in the park since 1978. All burns met prescription parameters and most management objectives.

Wilderness Impacts Monitoring. The portion of Yosemite's wilderness that lies south of the Tioga Road including Little Yosemite Valley, and east of Tenaya Canyon to the Sierra Crest was inventoried for campsite and travel route impacts. Over 1,800 campsites were mapped, rated and photographed. The length of travel routes inventoried for impacts will be calculated in 1986. Four volunteers, one CCC employee, and one resources management staff member accomplished the survey from June 24 through September 13. The wilderness impacts surveyed were the most severe and extensive in the four year history of the impacts study.

Hazard Trees. In 1985, Forestry crews removed 2,593 trees considered to be hazardous to life and property from Yosemite; 1,104 of these trees were from Yosemite Valley alone. A hazardous tree survey to determine the existing workload was made in September. A backlog of 8.2 work years was documented. The backlog consisted of 4,250 trees which will require removal and 1,500 trees which will require trimming. Before removal of this backlog begins, an Environmental Impact Statement will be written to protect the ecological, historical and aesthetic values these trees represent.

Environmental Compliance Program. Park environmental compliance work during 1985 included the writing of approximately 60 categorical exclusions, environmental assessments, and findings of no significant impact statements; review of nine planning proposals/construction plans from bordering agencies and private developers, three of which concerned hydroelectric power developments on the Merced River, Tuolumne River, and Crane Creek; more than 65 site inspections with resulting verbal clearances for routine in-park maintenance and phone company projects; coordination with and assistance to the Denver Service Center in the writing, review, and environmental clearances on eight major environmental assessments for park construction projects, comprehensive design plans and associated contract specifications; inspections of contractors and assistance to DSC field supervisors during construction activity to assure environmental compliance and resource protection; and writing of a water conservation plan for the Wawona area.

Air Quality/Visibility Monitoring Program. Two air quality monitoring stations were operated in the park; one in Yosemite Valley and one on Turtleback Dome at the southwest end of the Valley. A camera was temporarily installed at the Wawona Tunnel to document effects of regional haze on visibility within Yosemite Valley, but was discontinued due to theft and vandalism problems. An ozone monitoring program was also initiated in the park this year by the research branch of the National Park Service Air Quality Division.

Acid Rain Monitoring. Yosemite continued to participate in the nationwide National Atmospheric Deposition Program and operated an NADP acid rain station at Hodgdon Meadows. A state acid rain sampler was also reactivated this past year at the Hodgdon Meadows site, with park personnel collecting and analyzing the samples for the state. The acid rain sampling lab was relocated from Hodgdon Meadows to the Resource

Management Office to provide higher standards of quality assurance during analysis and to minimize travel time to and from the lab.

Pest Management Program. An Integrated Pest Management Program was introduced within the park. The goal of the program was to reduce pesticide use levels in the park while maintaining control of pest populations and to select the least harmful pesticide, where pesticides were required. The park terminated its routine spraying contract for FY86, and pest control needs are now being evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In addition, strict controls have been instituted within the park for purchasing pesticides or releasing pest control contracts.