



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia & Kings Canyon  
National Parks

47050 Generals Highway  
Three Rivers, CA 93271

559 565-3703 phone  
559 565-3789 fax

## Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks

### The Horse Fire: Wilderness Response to a Wilderness Fire

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks have spent the last 80 years managing fires in the remote back country areas. When the Horse Fire started by lightning on July 19, park staff saw an opportunity to manage this fire similar to 1930s era wildland fire. Instead of relying on the park helicopter for transport, firefighters hiked the twenty miles round-trip to the fire near Hockett Meadows.

As with all fires, staff made a determination on how to respond to the fire based on its location, potential for spread, and other variables. Because of its remote location, monitoring was the chosen strategy.

Firefighters hiked into the fire for multiple-day assignments to assess and map fire growth. In total, fire crews hiked over 1,500 miles over the course of the summer and fall. They called in additional firefighters to assist with the protection of the historic Hockett Ranger Station as fire approached this cultural resource.

Adhering to the principles of the Wilderness Act, supplies and materials were brought in primarily by stock, with nine stock trips completed for the duration of the fire. Helicopter use was limited and no fireline was cut. The fire grew to 664 acres.

Naturally occurring fire allows forests to be thinned, opening the canopy and allowing sunlight through which allows for the sprouting and re-growth of plants, shrubs and trees. Fire also allows for the recycling of nutrients to the soil while reducing the amount of dead, woody debris. Managed lightning fires limit the size and severity of subsequent fires.



*Fire behavior included creeping ground fire with isolated pockets of torching.  
NPS Photo*



*Supplies for firefighters were brought in by stock. Grazing during the Horse Fire.  
NPS photo by Brandon Dethlefs.*

“The Horse Fire is an excellent example of a lightning fire in the Wilderness that restores the natural fire cycle in the fire- adapted Sierra Nevada. I am proud that our response reflected the nature of a wilderness park,” said Dave Allen, Sequoia District Fire Management Officer.

#### Contacts:

Michelle Puckett 559-565-4287

Deb Schweizer 559-565-3703

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