



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia & Kings Canyon
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Protecting Natural and Cultural Resources on the Lion Fire

The Lion Fire was started by lightning on Sequoia National Forest. As the fire grew, the containment line included a small area in the southern part of Sequoia National Park. This segment of the park near Quinn Peak and Soda Butte provided challenges for firefighters because of several natural and cultural resource concerns that included the Little Kern Golden Trout, foxtail pine, and the Quinn Patrol Cabin. The parks' Crew 91 and Engine 72 worked on the fire response in the park.

The Little Kern Golden Trout is a species endemic to a small area in the park and the forest just to the south. This species is found nowhere else naturally on the planet. Therefore, special efforts to protect this fish included no retardant, no dipping from these streams, and not adding fire within the riparian areas near the streams. This allows fire to back into the drainages and extinguish in these wet areas, as fire historically did. Additionally, if the crews needed to use pumps, the crews sanitized the equipment prior to use. Firefighters noticed an abundance of golden trout in the streams.

The foxtail pine is a high-elevation tree that experiences fire infrequently. With the exception of a small population in northern California, foxtail is restricted to the southern Sierra Nevada with its range largely confined to the upper portions of the Kern River watershed. It is closely related to the bristlecone pine that is east of the Sierra in the Great Basin. Fire crews were deliberate to not add any fire into foxtail pine. Fire from lower elevations and different fuel types did not, as a rule, carry into the foxtail, allowing for natural fire to play its role in all ecosystems.



*The foxtail pine grows at high elevations and in sparse fuels that do not encourage frequent or intense fires.
Photo by Tony Caprio*

The Quinn Patrol Cabin is on the National Register of Historic Places. This cabin was constructed in 1906 by the US Cavalry. They were responsible for patrol and protection of the park prior to the formation of the National Park Service in 1916. It is noted for its unusual cabin construction with vertical rather than horizontal log walls.

Its name heralds back to Harry Quinn, one of many settlers who made a living by sheepherding in the high sierra meadows. Quinn established a horse camp to pasture his pack stock that supported his sheepherding operations. The formation of Sequoia National Park in 1890 closed this area and others to grazing. For the park and the military staff that patrolled it, keeping domestic sheep from the parks was a key goal. The Quinn Patrol Cabin was erected to keep effective patrols in the southern part of the park.

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Firefighters prepare for protection of the Quinn Patrol Cabin.

NPS photo by Lyle Pope.

Today, park trail crews and rangers still use the cabin. The parks' historic preservation staff recently completed key maintenance to the building, including replacement of the shake roof to ensure that this cabin and its history remain intact.

Firefighters observed significant accumulations of dead and down fuel near the cabin and worked to remove these fuels from near the cabin, creating a defensible space area. As the Lion Fire approached, they conducted strategic burning operations near it to remove fuels in front of the main fire and therefore protect the cabin.

Thanks to the excellent work of firefighters, the natural and cultural values that help define why the national parks exist were protected. The fire helped reduce the accumulation of fuels; restoring the natural process of fire in the fire-adapted Sierra Nevada.

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