

**Bearpaw High
Sierra Camp
celebrates
75 years**

—SEE PAGES 6-7

THE Kaweah Commonwealth

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WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THREE RIVERS AND SEQUOIA~KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

Gunfire reported at Crystal Cave

Sequoia National Park rangers are investigating a report received Saturday, Aug. 22, of shots fired somewhere in the vicinity of Crystal Cave. The popular summer attraction was closed at 3 p.m. that day and has remained closed all week as a precaution.

“Right now the plan is to reopen Crystal Cave on Saturday, August 29,” said Adrienne Freeman, Sequoia National Park public information officer. “Safety of

park employees and visitors is foremost, and it’s not worth the risk having anyone in the area until the investigation has been concluded.”

NPS rangers have been conducting flyovers in the steep terrain below and around Crystal Cave in an attempt to locate where the gunfire might have originated. The incident commander heading up the investigation is Dan Pontbriand, Se-

quoia district ranger.

There is speculation that the gunfire came from an illegal pot plantation or someone might be illegally hunting in the area. Freeman said the park will release more information on the incident Friday, prior to the reopening of Crystal Cave.

Anyone may report information anonymously on this incident or any crime in the national parks by calling 1-888-NPS-CRIME.

Parks volunteers honored at potluck

About 40 people attended a potluck and presentation at the Beetle Rock Education Center in the Giant Forest area of Sequoia National Park on Thursday, Aug. 20. Volunteers-in-Parks (VIPs) throughout the country were honored on this day.

Locally, VIPs were recognized for their work with public education and other projects. Volunteers staff visitor centers, rove riverways, patrol trails, replant native plants, and more.

Former NPS director George Hartzog established the VIP program in 1970. In the past year, about 163,000 volunteers nationwide devoted 5.4 million hours of work valued at more than \$100 million to national parks.



THREE RIVERS VOLUNTEERS are (from left to right) Larry Baker, Ken Greenspan, Ranger Tim Barrett, Bonnie Nelson, Lew Nelson, Jim Dempsey, Marcia Goldstein, Lee Goldstein, and Ranger Denise Robertson. —NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTO

Monarch burns in Crescent Meadow

By JOHN ELLIOTT

For some folks seeing or just knowing that a giant sequoia has fire in its crown and its limbs are crashing to the forest floor below is enough to evoke tears of sadness and stir deep emotions. To witness the death of one these majestic monarchs is a tragedy nobody who witnesses it will ever forget.

So this week, when it was discovered that a giant sequoia, perhaps thousands of years old, was engulfed in flame as a result of a prescribed burn near Crescent Meadow, there were several calls



CONE ZONE: A giant sequoia cone and some seeds scattered on the ash bed in the aftermath of a prescribed fire. Giant sequoia seeds need fire to propagate.

—NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTO

of the Washington Tree in 2003 during a prescribed fire, then listed as the second largest tree in the world, park policy on the protection of named trees is very specific.

“We protect named trees from fire unless it is a safety issue,” said Deb Schweizer, parks fire

to the Commonwealth voicing a collective plea to look into this latest burning of another Big Tree.

Since the accidental burning

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THREE RIVERS SCHOOL.

Vandals target TRUS

Do you know where your children are?

To TRUS students and the community of Three Rivers:

The 2009-2010 school year has begun at TRUS. It has been a good start.

The students are excited to see their friends again; they are prepared for a fresh start with a new teacher, and the teachers are launching into another year of learning. It’s always nice to have the kids back on campus. They are what we are all about!

However, over the last month, some very disturbing things have happened on the TRUS campus. Several incidences of vandalism have occurred after hours.

They took place most frequently when men’s softball was happening on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. More than once, a staff member working here preparing for the start of school or I would see a large group of upper graders and high school students wandering, running, yelling, and/or hiding around the campus. We knew them, we talked to them, and then the next day some vandalism occurred.

Here are some examples of the disturbing behaviors that have been occurring:

—Students were up on the ad-

It is obvious to me that it is our kids...

—SUSAN SHERWOOD
SUPERINTENDENT
THREE RIVERS SCHOOL

ministration roof; a few tiles were torn up and, along with other items, thrown to the ground.

—A breaker switch was flipped on an air conditioner.

—Inappropriate writing was scrawled on the roof.

—Mrs. St. Martin, the new kindergarten teacher, regularly found broken glass on the kindergarten play-yard, as well as play equipment that had been flipped over.

—Excrement was smeared on a classroom window.

—Insulting and inappropriate words were etched into one of the doors.

—Someone walked by the portable classrooms with something sharp and slashed all the screens. They all now have to be rescreened.

—The night before the first day of school (Wednesday, Aug.

—see TRUS, page 3

education specialist. “Apparently, the tree in question was an unnamed monarch that already had a structural weakness that allowed fire easily to get in.”

Deb explained that like all organic things, these trees die as a part of the life cycle and during their lifetimes are changed by natural processes including fire.

“Fire has created several trees that visitors love to see like Tharp’s Log, the Chimney Tree, and Tunnel Log to name a few

examples,” Deb said. “This process is continuing now and will create the next generation of hollowed trees that attract visitors.”

The recent burning near Crescent Meadow was the aftermath of a 64-acre prescribed burn that was ignited the first week of August. Fires of this size and scope generally are permitted to creep and smolder in the forest until they are doused by an extended period of precipitation.

• KAWEAH COUNTRY OUTLOOK: three rivers • lemon cove • woodlake •

Saturday, August 29	Sunday, August 30	Monday, August 31	Tuesday, September 1	Wednesday, September 2	Thursday, September 3	Friday, September 4
Clouds and sun Hi 101 • Lo 67	Mostly sunny Hi 99 • Lo 63	Clouds and sun Hi 96 • Lo 62	Sunny Hi 96 • Lo 63	Sunny Hi 96 • Lo 64	Sunny Hi 97 • Lo 63	Sunny Hi 93 • Lo 60

WEATHER WATCH

Daytime temperatures will trend downward slightly as the waning days of summer transition from August to September. The trace of rainfall in Three Rivers on Saturday, Aug. 22, is perhaps a hopeful sign that the first significant rainfall is just around the corner. An early start to the annual rainy season would be an answer to the prayers of California firefighters and foothills residents because with each passing day, more wildfires are being reported up and down the state.