

MOUNT SHASTA

Climbing Ranger Report 2021



Season Summary

The 2021 season on the Shasta/McCloud Management Unit was like none other. A laundry list of events kept Forest Service rangers and locals alike thinking, "What next!?"

Many look forward to the spring ski season on Mt. Shasta. This year, there was...none. Winter, abruptly transitioned to summer. Rangers hung up their skis in early May. The 20/21 winter was below historic averages. Snow depths were better on the west side in the Eddy Mountains due to variable storm tracks and localized storm activity. Wind was a common theme over the winter. Lower elevations below treeline showed better overall averages compared to high elevations. We experienced colder storms with very few rain on snow events on the mountain. Warm and wet storms allow the snow to stick to the mountain much better than the cold, dry and windy storms. It happened repeatedly: A storm would dump snow on the mountain and then be followed by strong northwesterly wind, blowing much of the snow away...all winter long. By Spring, all that remained was a salt and pepper, rock strewn snowpack with a few long strips of dirty snow in the low-lying gullies. The glaciers looked emaciated and icy. The winter snowpack is like a blanket, and the glaciers rely on the snow as insulation from the hot summer sun. This year, the glaciers would have to fend for themselves.

With the main south and west side routes in poor shape early in the season, climbers flocked to the Clear Creek route. On the east side of the mountain, this climb is one of the easiest and does not host any rockfall due to the low angle nature of the route. But before the climb, the adventure begins on the road leading to the trailhead. Record crowds drove up the 8-mile dirt road, pulverizing it into volcanic powder. Vehicles became stuck, mufflers ripped off, undercarriages damaged. On one busy weekend, 108 cars were counted at the small trailhead parking area. Despite being the "easiest" way up the mountain, searches and rescues occur every year on this route, including one this season. While climbing up through a short headwall at 13,000 feet, a 31-year-old, solo male climber pulled a large boulder onto his leg rendering him unable to walk. He was rescued by California Highway Patrol helicopter and a USFS climbing ranger via hoist.

Search and Rescue remains a large part of the climbing ranger program. We are happy to report there were no fatalities on the mountain this year.

The USFS maintains a cooperative search and rescue (SAR) agreement with Siskiyou County, and this continues to be a positive relationship. While the county functions as the lead agency for SAR, rangers assist with most incidents on the mountain. The California Highway Patrol, Northern Air Operations Unit out of Redding, California also continues to support air reconnaissance and hoist rescues on the mountain. The Redding unit houses two helicopters with hoist and medical capabilities. We had 2 searches and 3 rescues utilizing CHP helicopters.

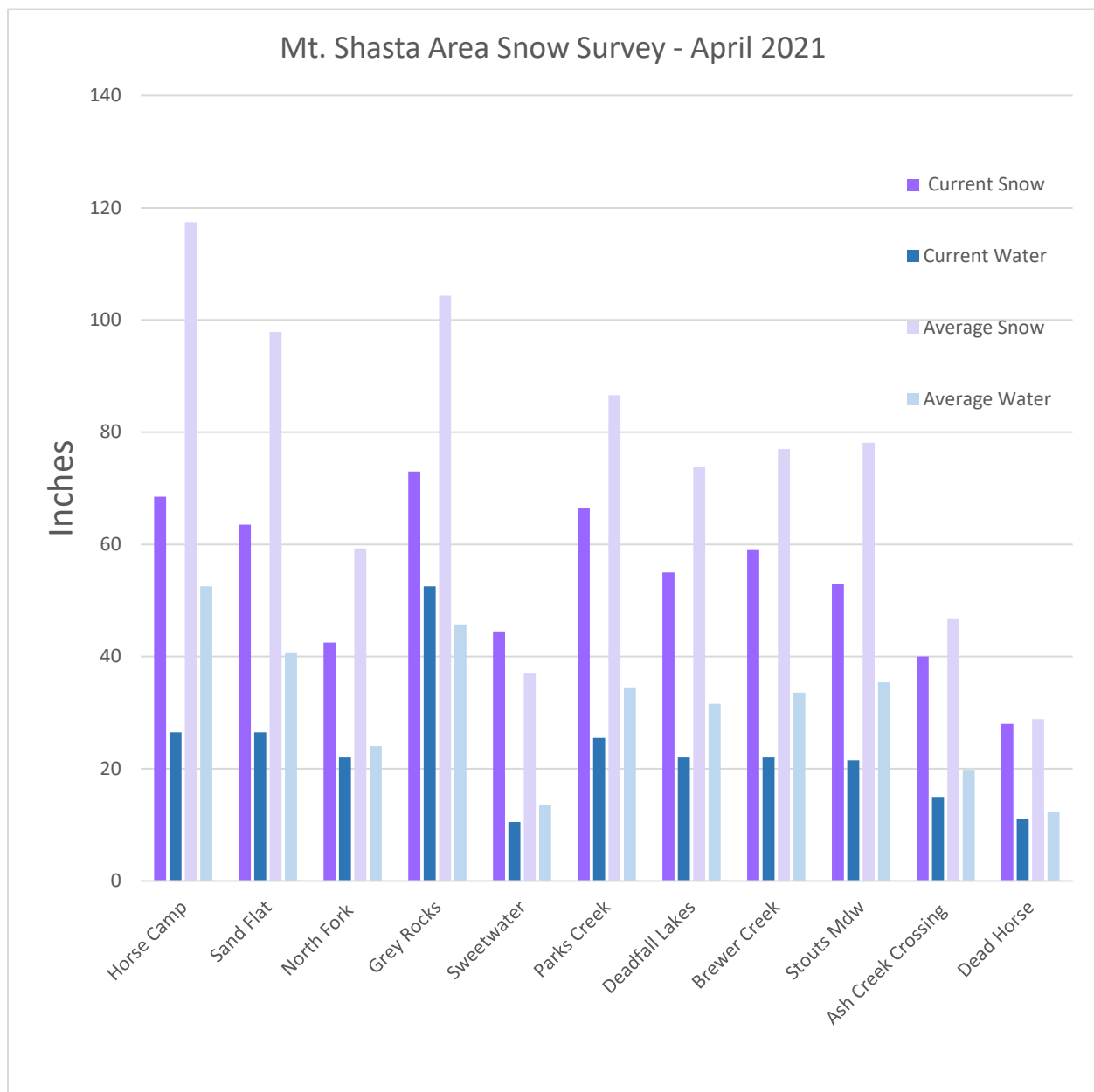
Each year, the US Forest Service, Siskiyou County Sheriff's SAR members, CHP and mountain guides come together for the annual, interagency helicopter search and rescue training. All agencies and partners experienced a safe and important training this year. Last year, the training was cancelled due to COVID.

Rangers patrolled busy climbing routes, but with climber numbers down, they also took on other tasks like sign replacement, road repair, tree bucking and trail work, training, forest patrols and kids group hikes.

And then in late June, the Lava Fire started by lightning and kicked off what was one of the worst fire seasons in California. Smoke filled the sky for months on end. Many days, you couldn't see Mount Shasta from town. Some days, you couldn't see it from Bunny Flat. Fire burned up to treeline on the flanks of Shastina. Fires burned across much of Northern California, including the massive Dixie Fire in Plumas County. All said and done, it was a tragic season for fire destroying forests, towns, and houses everywhere.

If this wasn't enough, Mt. Shasta decided to unleash a series of small to large debris flows (lahars) around the mountain mid-summer. Major and minor drainages including Whitney Creek, Inconstance Creek, Ash Creek and Mud Creek all released debris flows of variable size. Whitney Creek jumped highway 97. Ash Creek and Mud Creek took out the 31 road. Mud Creek also closed the Pilgrim Creek Road. Existing stream channels filled with mud, rock, and debris. New stream channels formed, and old channels put to bed. The alluvial fan geologic process was strong, debris flows acting like 7 headed monsters. Just as soon as a flow headed in one direction, off it went another.

As the smoke-filled summer dragged on and fires ragged, resources to fight the fires became a concern. On the day after opening day of hunting (bow) season, the Shasta-Trinity National Forest closed, along with all other national forests in California. Top all this off with COVID and well, that's the short of it!



Mt. Shasta Summit Collections for FY 2021

<u>Fee Tube Collections</u>		
Site	Number of Sales	Total Sales
Brewer Creek	81	2,030.05
Bunny Flat	418	10,453.55
Clear Creek	720	17,991.37
Mt. Shasta Office	245	6116
North Gate	43	1,065
Old Ski Bowl	10	252
Sand Flat	1	14
Total	1518	\$37,921.97

Mt. Shasta Summit Pass Sales

Type of Pass	Number of Passes	Total Sales
3 Day Pass	77	1,925
3 Day Pass-Senior Discount	1	12.50
3 Day Vendor Sales	1210	27,225
Annual Pass	88	2,640
Annual Pass Senior Discount	2	30.00
Annual Pass Vendor Sales	190	5,130
Total	1,568	\$31,832.50

Summary for Mt. Shasta Summit Collections

Source	Number of Sales	Total Collected
Fee Tubes	1518	\$37,921.97
Pass Sales	1,568	\$31,832.50
Grand Total for FY 2021	3,086	\$69,754.47

Total Collections for FY 2021

Collection Source	Total Collected
Mt. Shasta Summit Program	\$69,754.47 <i>Down \$43,716 from FY20</i>

Search & Rescue

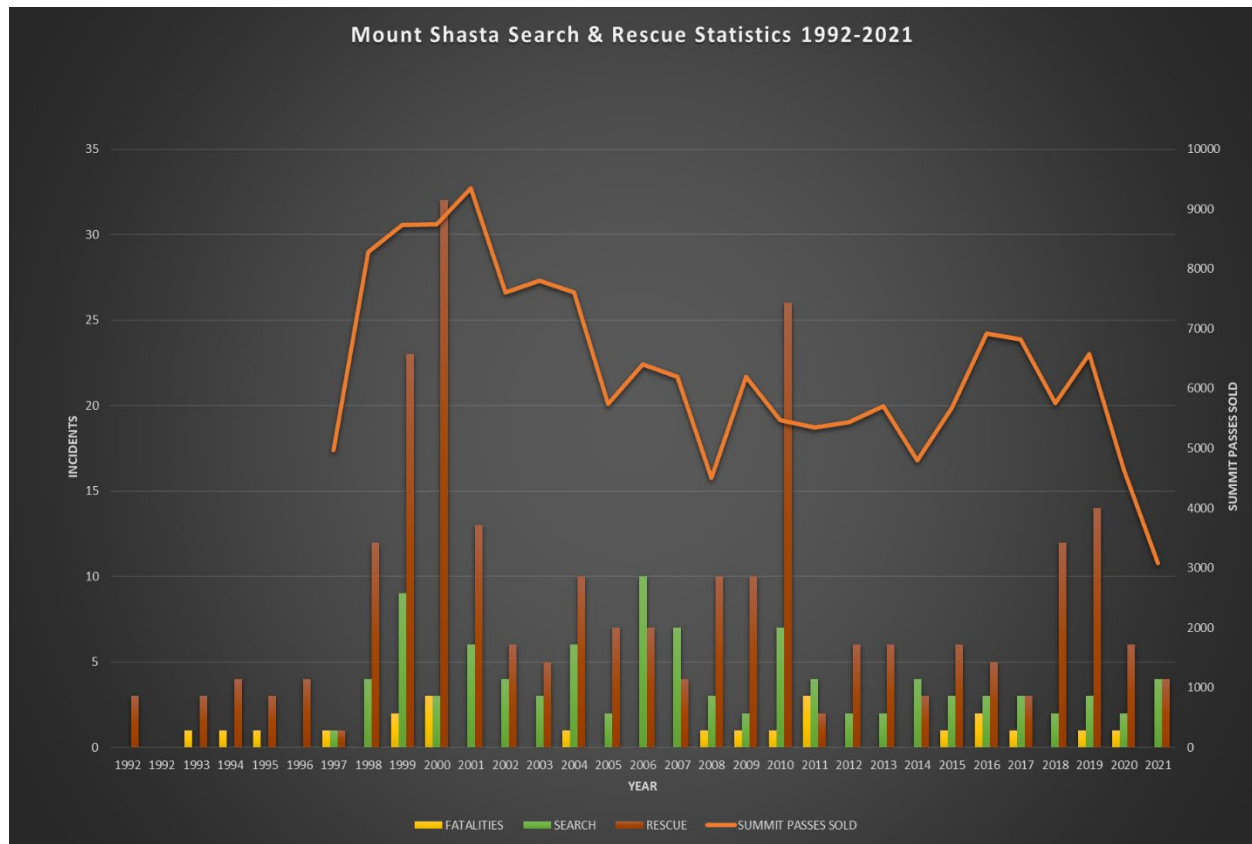
The US Forest Service Mt. Shasta Climbing Rangers continue to operate and conduct search and rescue activities on the mountain under a current memorandum of understanding with the Siskiyou County Sheriff's department, the lead agency for all search and rescue operations. Mt. Shasta City Fire and CALFIRE will also come to the aid of visitors for lower elevation mishaps and medical aids near trailheads and/or roads.

A typical search or rescue on the mountain begins with a 911 call. Cell service is good in many locations on Mt. Shasta. Dispatch forwards the call through to the on-duty Sheriff's department SAR coordinator. The coordinator, under the MOU, shall notify on duty USFS ranger personnel, and a plan is devised. Helicopters used for rescues on the mountain include California Highway Patrol out of Redding and the National Guard out of Sacramento. The CHP H-14/16 conducts most of the helicopter rescues on the mountain. Two helicopters are stationed in Redding and pilots/crew are on duty and usually able to respond within 30 minutes. Both helicopters have hoist capabilities and a medic on board. Many of the pilots have years of experience flying on the mountain. Rangers and SAR personnel train with both agencies annually.

This year, the total number of incidents on the mountain were down from the last couple seasons, most likely due to COVID and the associated forest closures. The mean for summit passes sold over the past 20 years is 6,467 and in 2021 the Forest Service sold 3,086. This is in comparison to 4,633 the year prior. For the same period, search and rescue incident average is 20, with only 9 incidents for the 2021 year.

Overall, incidents were a mix this year, including rockfall injuries, snowmobile injuries, slips and falls, a skiing accident and lost hikers.

Search - 4
Rescue - 4
Fatality - 0
Self-Rescue - 1
False Alarms (FA) - 0



The Rangers

It was another season for rangers Nick Meyers (20th), Forrest Coots (15th), Paul Moore (5th) and Ryan Sorenson (3rd). We were fortunate to also have an additional ranger for his rookie season, Joe Delaporta, for a total five rangers.

Despite COVID, the entire Shasta/McCloud Management Unit was inundated with visitors of all sorts. Rangers spent ample time on the mountain patrolling, participating in search and rescues, maintaining trailhead facilities and making hundreds of visitor contacts.

Safety and proper sanitation remain top priorities. Weekends were the busiest for climbers and campers, but mid-week crowds increased this season also. Rangers work under the umbrella of the larger recreation department and function as trail crew, sign technicians and sanitation specialists, too. There are not enough fingers and toes to count the number of pickup truck and stake-side loads of dispersed camping trash and

abandoned camps hauled to the dump. Trash and junk, left behind in all places, was the norm. The Everitt Memorial Highway corridor and the South Fork Road are popular dispersed camping areas where the problem was most evident. It is unfortunate to see the mess visitors leave behind. Nonetheless, a lot of job satisfaction is gained through helping manage, protect, and clean up such an amazing place as Mount Shasta.

Rangers are proud of another season with zero on the job injuries. The job is widely variable and has many moments of high-risk activity. It is a testament to each ranger's ability to safely manage themselves and others in dangerous environments.

The Mt Shasta Climbing Rangers are a small team on a big mountain. It's critical that we work together, trust each other, and communicate clearly and often. Everyone brings something different to the table. It's these common traits that keep us safe and happy in the job.



Outreach & Public Education

A long history has been established within the US Forest Service ranger program to foster local partnerships within the community. We continue this today through a variety of local and broader outreach efforts. Many forms of free education and awareness are provided, locally and out of the area, children to adults. This year, many of our typical events did not happen due to fire, smoke and forest closures.

Volunteers

The rangers employ a select few volunteers each season to help with a myriad of duties. The visitor information trailer is a great example of government/local partnerships and volunteers giving back to the community. The visitor information trailer locations include Bunny Flat, Panther Meadows, and the Old Ski Bowl. Volunteers help share information with visitors about all things Mount Shasta and the area. Volunteers also help with Bunny Flat facility cleaning and maintenance and Panther Meadows campground host duties. Our volunteers are a solid set of people with high integrity, and we appreciate their willingness to help us on the mountain. Mount Shasta is a world class destination for many forms of use and recreation. It takes a village of dedicated, passionate, and caring folks to protect and share all it has to offer.

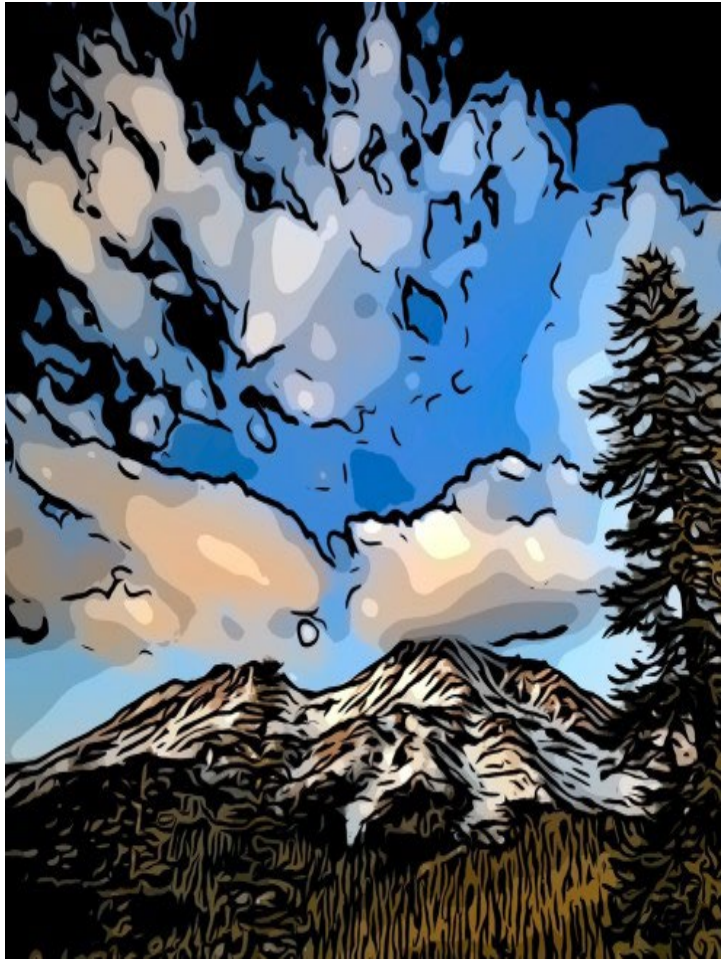


Common Warnings and Incident Reports issued by Rangers:

- Motorized use in Mount Shasta Wilderness: This involves either over snow vehicles (snowmobile/snow cat) and/or ATV use
- Dogs in Wilderness: Dogs are not allowed inside the Mount Shasta Wilderness or on Sierra Club land.
- Illegal Camping: These incidents are typically limited to people camping too close to springs/creeks inside the Mount Shasta Wilderness, specifically in the Clear Creek spring area just above tree line. Other illegal camping incidents involve camping in day use areas, or inside the Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) area of Panther Meadows. The only camping allowed in the TCP is in the designated sites of Panther Meadows campground.
- Sanitation/Litter: Rangers frequently find either climber camps or most often, transient camps outside of the Mount Shasta Wilderness in the Sand Flat/Bunny Flat/Panther Meadows area that are unsanitary with abandoned property and trash. Climber camps found are usually from improperly securing equipment/trash upon leaving for a summit attempt. Animals and wind will spread climber tents and gear far and wide. Rangers also find a lot of “micro-trash” at major base camps on Mount Shasta. Tear offs of wrappers, match sticks, tea bags, tent stakes, food scraps, etc. account for much of the trash hauled off the mountain.
- Abandoned camp: Abandoned camps are ongoing and most often found in the dispersed camping areas along the Everitt Memorial Highway, Sand Flat, Bunny Flat and Upper Ski Bowl. The South Fork Flats, Twin Arrows, and Bear Springs areas also host abandoned camp issues.
- SMMU District Trash: During slower times, rangers will patrol other areas around the SMMU district aside from the Everitt Memorial corridor and Mount Shasta Wilderness. Trash, waste dumps, shooting ranges, abandoned camps are found every year.
- Parking: On occasion we get vehicles parking and obstructing the Everitt Memorial Highway at or near Bunny Flat. It's not uncommon to

observe 150+ cars at the Bunny Flat Trailhead on a busy weekend. Our road counter on the Everitt Memorial Highway counted 131,088 cars for the 2017 year with an average of 2.2 people per car. This is a dead end road that terminates in the Old Ski Bowl.

- Fire/Campfire in Wilderness: Small campfire rings are found each year and are dismantled. Campfires are not allowed inside the Mount Shasta Wilderness. Fire rings are naturalized and ashes packed out.
- Oversize Group: Group size is limited to 10 inside the Mount Shasta Wilderness, as well as in Panther Meadows. This also includes groups of over 75 people outside Wilderness boundaries.
- Illegal Commercial Guiding: Commercial guiding on Mount Shasta without a permit is an ongoing occurrence, but one we are gaining ground on. Almost all suspected illegal commercial use lies within the spiritual/new age realm and outside of wilderness boundary, although we have had a few climbing groups suspected of illegal guiding.
- Exceeding 30 Day Stay limit: We often run into folks in Mount Shasta who want to spend the summer “living” in the Mount Shasta/McCloud district. Rangers must do their best to keep track of folks and their stay limit on the forest.



Mount Shasta: By the numbers...

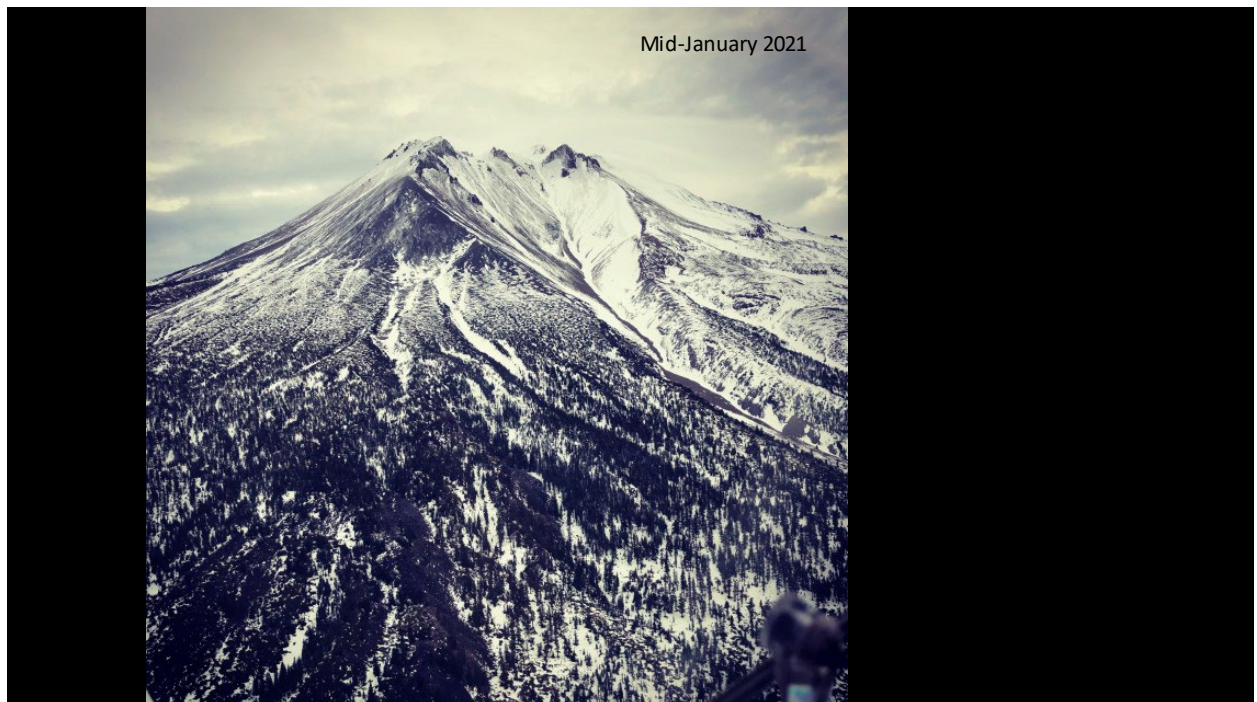
Winter 20/21

- 47% of normal for wet season
- 159 inches snow (treeline)
- 22 inches- max snowfall in 24 hours
- 98 mph- max wind gust recorded
- 30 F degrees average temp
- 7 F and 56 F min and max temps recorded





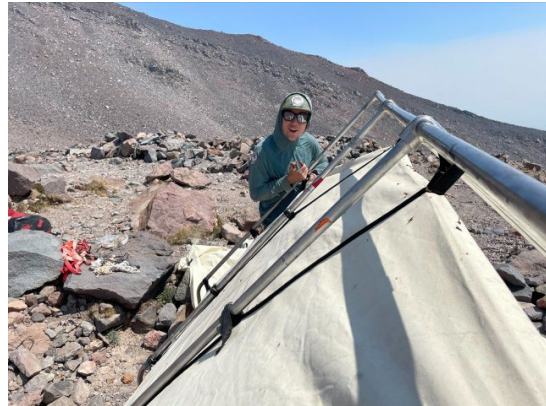
Forest Closures





Early April 2021

May 8th, 2021 – Lake Helen Ranger tent in place!





Wilderness patrols





Trail work, log bucking



Never ending trash pick-up

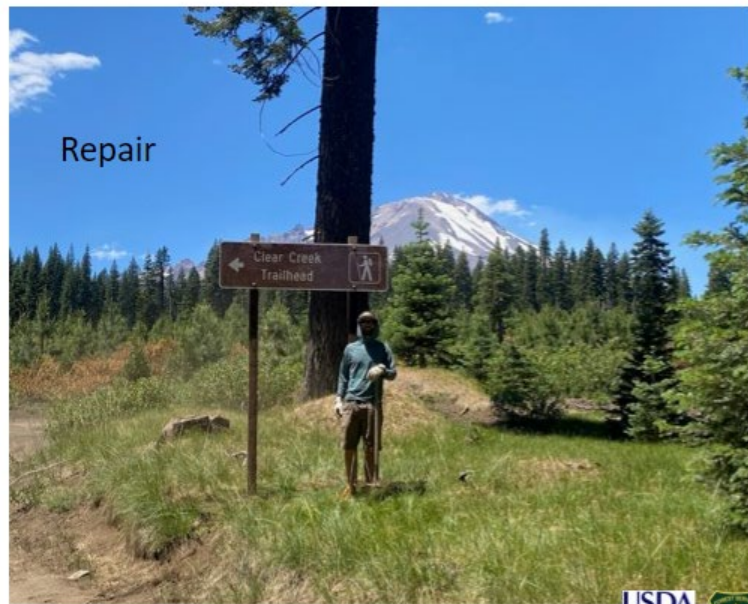


Abandoned camps/trash dumps





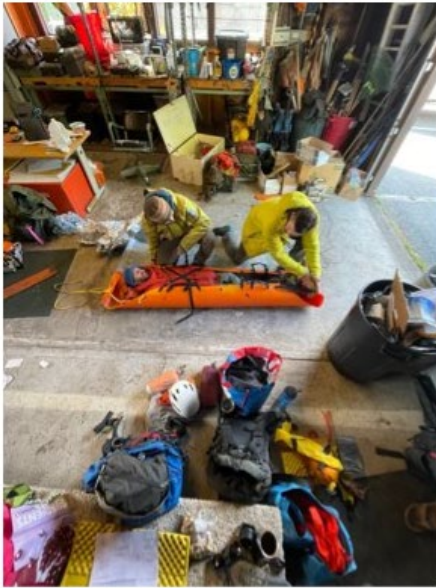
Illegal campfires/Stay limit issues...



Repair



Training



Wilderness Patrols

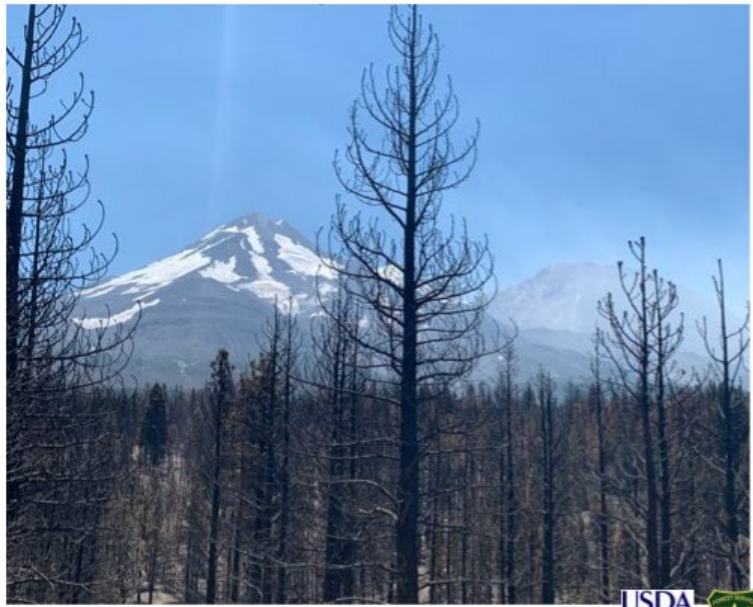




Wilderness Patrols



Lava Fire



Lava Fire





Photo: KA Snure



Lava Fire



Clear Creek trailhead

Mt Shasta Wintun Glacier and east side 2012 and 2021



Whitney Creek debris flows



Ash Creek



Ash Creek and FS road 31 crossing



Mud Creek and Pilgrim Creek Road crossing

Thank You



All information, reports and statistics compiled by the USFS Mt. Shasta
Climbing Rangers.

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