

MOUNT SHASTA WILDERNESS

Climbing Ranger Report

2022



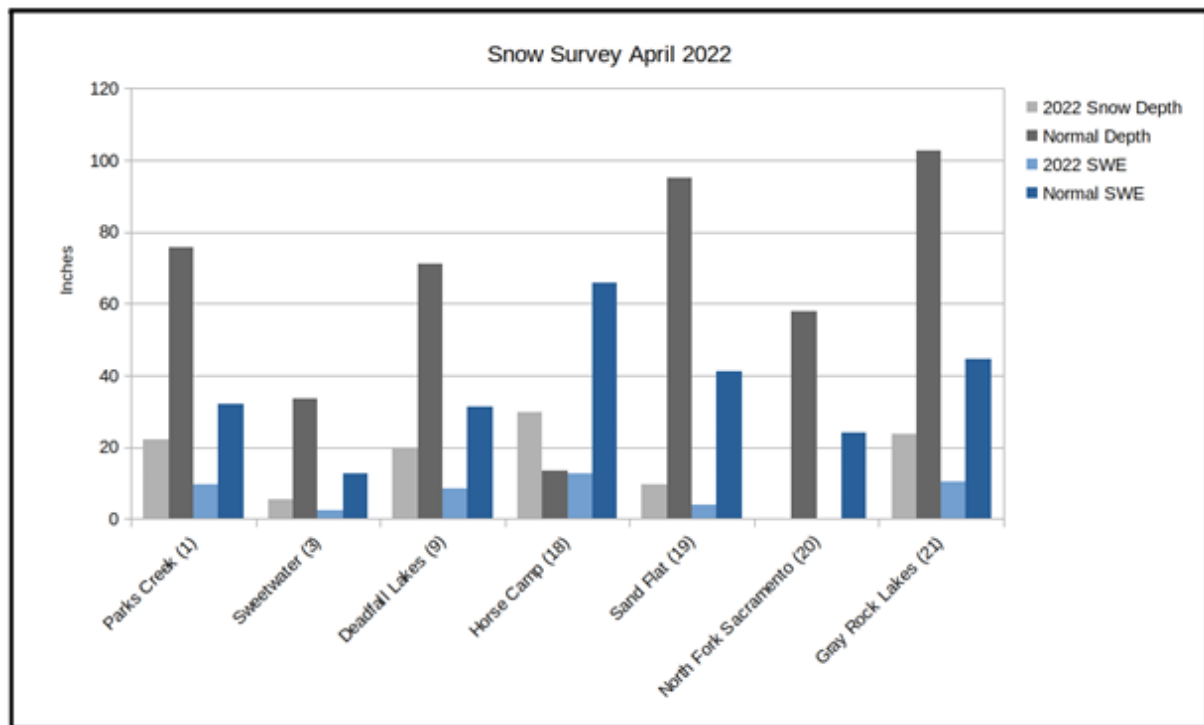
Season Summary

A robust winter snowpack is crucial for setting up a good climbing season on Mount Shasta. Unfortunately, it was another dry 2021/22 winter in Northern California with far below average snowfall, despite starting off with a bang. Last Fall brought a record-breaking atmospheric river



Above: Avalanche Gulch, April '22

event in late October, bringing feet of snow to the mountain. Another storm in November further increased snow coverage. Winter weather continued with consistent low elevation snow through January 8th, 2022. Then, it shut down. A persistent ridge of high pressure parked itself off the coast of California and a mid-winter dry spell of 37 days commenced. This also broke records. Media reports stated that it was the driest January/February in the past 127 years for Northern California. Only a few inches of snow fell in late February and early March...not nearly enough to switch the net balance in a positive direction. Temps soared above average. The snowpack continued to melt quickly in March. At the beginning of April 2022, precipitation was only 11% of normal. Climbing season was not looking good. Most south facing terrain was devoid of snow. The Mt. Shasta Ski Park shut down March 23rd. By March 24th, it was no longer possible to find consistent snow from Bunny Flat into Avalanche Gulch. Nobody thought a storm big enough could change the game, but April surprised us all by delivering 30-40 inches of snow. This wasn't a complete game changer, but enough to boost spirits, and the climbing season, a little bit.



The Rangers

It was a year of change for the U.S. Forest Service Mount Shasta climbing rangers. Paul Moore, a ranger of 5 years, took on a new teaching role locally and Ryan Sorenson, a 3-year ranger, went on to pursue other endeavors up in Washington state. These vacancies were filled with two stellar new rangers, Ryan Lazzeri and Haylee Darby. These two exceptional individuals quickly meshed with the program and brought great experience and attitudes to the crew. Longtime seasonal ranger Forrest Coots came back for his 16th and final season with the rangers. Forrest applied for, was offered and accepted a permanent trails coordinator position on the local SMMU district. His knowledge, skills and abilities will be sorely missed, but it's nice to know that he is close by and can continue to help with search and rescue missions, trails and other recreation responsibilities. Congratulations to him on the permanent position and for the many years of service as a climbing ranger. Forrest grew up in Mount Shasta and it is comforting to know he is still around to consult his lifelong knowledge of the mountain and local area.

Mid-way through the summer, due to life circumstances, Ryan resigned from the job and moved on to other pastures. Haylee continued to work her full tour of duty but unfortunately will not be returning next season. Insert sad face here! We are grateful for everything that Ryan and Haylee brought to the program and wish them well riding the wave of life. Ryan completely overhauled and re-vamped our technical search and rescue gear cache, a much-needed task.

Haylee was a climbing and visitor relations dynamo. Her positive attitude and affect with the public and co-workers were contagious. She excelled in public speaking and educational programs, not to mention ticking off at least 10 summits over the spring and summer patrolling the climbing routes of the mountain, despite the less than ideal climbing conditions.

The salty old dog Nick Meyers just turned 40 years of age and completed his 21st season on the mountain, still functioning as the lead climbing ranger and program director. During the season, Nick applied for and received a promotion within the program. He now serves as a GS-9 wilderness program manager. The duties will be much of the same, but with better compensation. For those that don't know, this GS-9 position has been desired by and at times fought for by Nick's predecessors for nearly 2 decades. Needless to say, it was a celebratory moment and an honor to receive the bump.

Overall, we are extremely happy to report that in our high stress, high risk environment we frequently work in, we had zero on the job injuries this year...always a commendable achievement.



2022 Mt Shasta Climbing Rangers, clockwise from top left, Nick Meyers, Forrest Coots, Haylee Darby & Ryan Lazzeri



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.

For the year of 2022, we had a total of 11 SAR incidents, about half of our running average of 20 incidents per year since 1992. Eight of the incidents were rescues, one a self-rescue and one a false alarm (false In-Reach activation). We had zero climber searches for the season.

March was not looking good for the climbing season, but the April snowstorms gave a last minute stoke

and provided decent climbing conditions. Climbers and outfitter guides gave it a go in April, May and June when conditions are typically the best. Many made it to the top and back down safely and some did not. Most notably was the June 6th and 7th incidents, making national news. Over the course of 24 hours, USFS rangers, Siskiyou County SAR, California Highway Patrol and local outfitter guides responded to 4 separate incidents resulting in 5 injured and 1 fatality, an outfitter guide. All incidents during this fateful 24 hours occurred on the Avalanche Gulch route. The route is the easiest accessed and most popular on the mountain. A late season storm over the weekend doused Mount Shasta with rain, snow, fog and freezing temperatures, creating very firm and icy climbing conditions. A warm, wet storm followed by freezing temperatures can drastically change the nature of the mountain. A route that is considered a novice climb 90% of the time can be very dangerous the other 10%. Steep snow slopes on Mt Shasta turn in to no fall zones when icy conditions are present like this. Icy conditions can last days, or just a few



hours.

The first incident on the morning of Monday, June 6th involved an outfitter guide and her two clients, tied together on one rope. The team was near “rest rock”, below Redbanks in Avalanche Gulch when a team member slipped and fell, pulling everyone off their feet. The three slid and tumbled approximately 2,000 vertical feet down the route, eventually stopping below Helen Lake in Avalanche Gulch proper.



The two clients suffered major head and extremity injuries but will make a full recovery. The guide, Jillian Webster, 32, of Redmond, Oregon, became unresponsive about an hour and a half after the fall. CPR was initiated by an outfitter guide client on a separate trip, who works as an ICU nurse. CPR was in progress and the patient was pulseless at the time of hoist off the mountain by USFS Climbing Rangers Meyers, Lazzeri and California Highway Patrol Helicopter (CHP H-14).

The second incident occurred mid-day and involved a single climber, male, 34, who slipped and fell in the same area. Rangers Meyers and Lazzeri climbed back up the mountain from 50/50 Camp to respond. The climber was met by USFS rangers above Helen Lake, near the Upper Moraine, walking, but wounded. Rangers assisted him down to the CHP H-14 helicopter waiting at 50/50. Weather conditions prevented the helicopter from flying to any higher elevation landing zones. The climber had an ice axe and crampons, but no helmet. He reported that his crampons “slipped off” and caused him to fall.

The third incident happened later in the day and involved climbers from the second incident party. After witnessing their partner slip and fall, two sisters were overcome by fear. They waited just below Redbanks for several hours but eventually tried to descend. One climber

attempted to glissade and quickly lost control, sliding down the route and coming to a stop below The Heart. The snow was much softer at this point in the day (~1730 hours). Still, the climber was only responsive to pain. USFS Ranger Meyers was picked up at Horse Camp by CHP



H-14 and inserted onto the Upper Moraine. A short climb and quick patient package commenced. The climber was hoisted off the mountain at 1745 hours, ending a busy day on the mountain for rangers, CHP and Siskiyou County SAR personnel. Her sister descended on foot with Ranger Meyers and were flown off the mountain from 50/50 Flat by CHP. Both sisters had never climbed the mountain before, did not have helmets and were wearing lightweight hiking shoes with micro-spikes. They had ice axes but were not familiar with how to use them. They said they tried to get better equipment but arrived for their climb too early in the morning (midnight) when The Fifth

Season (gear rental shop) was not open.

On the morning of June 7th, a solo climber, male, 31, slipped and fell in the same location as the other accidents, in Avalanche Gulch near The Heart, below Redbanks. Siskiyou County SAR notified USFS Rangers and CHP H-14. US Forest Service Climbing Rangers met the helicopter at Mercy Medical Center Mt Shasta and were inserted onto the Upper Moraine in Avalanche Gulch. Both USFS Rangers Coots and Darby quickly climbed up to the scene and packaged the injured climber, hoisting him off the mountain at 1330 hours. All rescues this season were performed safely and without



incident. This highlights the exceptional knowledge and skill of all agency cooperators and is a result of years of rescuer experience and important Mt Shasta SAR helicopter trainings.



Mt Shasta Wilderness Trailhead Stats

Site	Number of Sales	Total Sales
Brewer Creek	70	1,745
Bunny Flat	1457	36,429.53
Clear Creek	620	15,524.73
Mt. Shasta Office	280	7,018.06
North Gate	42	1,042
Old Ski Bowl	19	484.26
Sand Flat	1	15
Total	2,489	\$62,258.58

Summary for Mt. Shasta Summit Collections

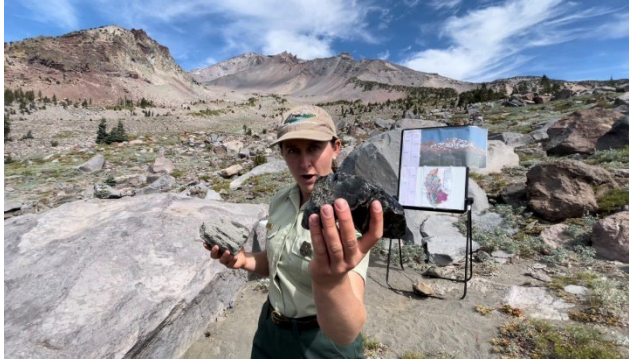
Source	Number of Sales	Total Collected
Fee Tubes	2489	\$62,258.58
Pass Sales	2,139	\$50,514.50
Grand Total for FY 2022	4628	\$112,773.08



Bunny Flat continues to remain our busiest trailhead. Clear Creek was 2nd this year, followed by Brewer, Northgate, Old Ski Bowl and Sand Flat.

Outreach and Public Education

USFS Rangers continued their strong educational interpretive programs. This year, the bar was raised. An anonymous Mt Shasta local donated monies to fund a full-time interpretive ranger this season, Haley Wilken (not to be confused with climbing ranger Haylee Darby). On her own



and from scratch, Haley drummed up and executed three interpretive talks this summer. These included Local Geology, Panther Meadow Ecology and History, Legend and Lore. Haley did all the research, scripted in English and Spanish, made presentation visuals, rehearsed, outreached, delivered and video recorded all the presentations

throughout the district. Many were (VERY) impressed. Despite Haley not returning next year, she laid down an immaculate foundation for new interpretive rangers to come. The climbing rangers aided the interp front by joining several local school groups for hikes to the Shasta Alpine Hut. Along the trail, rangers facilitate learning about subjects like Leave-No-Trace, hydrology, snow/weather/avalanches, local flora and fauna and area history.



Further, rangers gave presentations at the Breast Cancer Fund: Climb Against the Odds fundraiser dinner, [This is Who We Are](#) Forest Service video, Dunsmuir High School career days, Grinduro bike event, Mt Hood summer ski and board camps, Shasta Alpine Hut centennial celebration and numerous media outlets for the June 6/7 SAR incidents, including the LA Times, SF Chronical and Washington Post.

Dispersed Camping/Recreation Patrol

Common Warning Notices, Violations and Incident Reports issued by FPO Rangers every year:

- [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. • 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. 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. 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. Most illegal commercial use lies within the spiritual/new age realm and outside of Wilderness. Some involves climbing groups. • Exceeding Stay limit: We often run into folks in Mount Shasta who want to spend the

whole summer living on the Mount Shasta/McCloud district. Rangers do their best to monitor visitor overstay, but it's a constant game of cat and mouse.

Other Highlights

- The Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Forest Supervisor Rachel Birkey and her husband Scott, made it to the TOP of Mount Shasta. Over three days, climbing rangers Nick and Haylee Darby climbed with Rachel and Scott, having a really great and most importantly, safe trip. We're not certain on this, but Rachel might be the first ever SHF Forest Sup to make it to the top of the mountain.
- Climbing rangers and recreation staff built and installed over 50 brand new forest signs on the SMMU district. This was no small task. Look around as you cruise about the district, you'll see them. A big shout out to Shay Stem, Colleen Green and Forrest Coots for being prominent leaders in this charge. Many others helped...THANK YOU!



- Ranger Forrest Coots did a month detail in the fire sector as patrol. Forrest's tenacity for keeping select forest visitors within occupancy and use rules and regs is unparalleled. Great job getting out and keeping on those folks. You all know what I'm talking about.

- District Recreation Manager Becky Cooper, our fearless leader, moved on to another job with the BOR. She grew the program to amazing proportions and made important

partnerships in the community. Her dedication to the department is unmatched. We still consult her weekly with questions and hope she doesn't mind.

- No major fires. The hard-working fire boys and girls had approximately 40 fires on the forest over the course of the summer and none of them became major incidents. Bravo! The summer was almost completely smoke free. Rejoice!

- USGS mud flow monitoring. The USGS in cooperation with USFS rangers, USFS hydrology department and California Highway Patrol helicopter, installed several cameras at different locations on and around the mountain to monitor hydrological mud flow events. This was the first year this has been done and the self-



sustained camera units functioned well. Numerous mud flow events occurred in drainages around the mountain, the most notable in Mud Creek and Whitney Creek.

- Annual Interagency Search & Rescue Helicopter Training, hosted by the climbing rangers. Each year, the US Forest Service, Siskiyou County Sheriff's SAR members, California Highway Patrol, California National Guard and outfitter 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.



- New Panther Meadow Trailhead kiosk install in partnership and funded by the Mt Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center.

- Spring tree work: numerous trees and debris fall onto trails and roads around the mountain. Rangers cut and remove them.



- Trash continues to be a big theme in developed and dispersed areas around the flanks of Mount



Shasta. Overflowing receptacles and abandoned trash/camps are an everyday occurrence.



- Volunteers and FS Employee helpers: 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. Bruce, Bill, Linda, Cleonice, Tommy.... Thank you!

Thank You!



All information compiled by the USFS Mt. Shasta Climbing Rangers

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