

MOUNT SHASTA WILDERNESS

Climbing Ranger Report

2025





Photo: Mt Shasta, south side, April 20th, 2025

Season Summary

April is the month when avalanche center operations shut down and climbing season kicks in. No rest for the weary. The Sacramento, Shasta and Trinity watersheds finished off the winter 130% of normal for snowpack; on the McCloud side of the hill, 120% of normal. All systems go for a bountiful spring skiing and climbing season.



The US Forest Service, Mt Shasta climbing ranger crew began the same this season with Nick Meyers as longtime program manager, along with climbing rangers Sam Clairmont, Cory Beattie, Eric Falconer and Hayden MacArthur. Part way through the season, Cory transferred into the trails department, but stayed local in the district. At the end of the season, Sam took a new job with the Northwest Avalanche Center. Nick, Eric and Hayden remain and back filling the two vacant positions will occur.

Trailheads were slow to melt out due to the thick snowpack. Access to Northgate, Brewer and Clear Creek didn't become reasonable until late-May and June. The Avalanche Gulch and south side routes still take the lionshare of climbing and skiing. Brewer Creek trailhead experienced decent use for spring skiers as well. The Clear Creek route continues to be a popular late season route. Despite being the easiest climb to the summit, there are still real mountain hazards, especially if off route. This season, the Clear Creek route claimed two lives in August and September.

Rangers keep the tradition of establishing and maintaining their Helen Lake "Club Fed" camp at 10,400 feet in Avalanche Gulch. This home away from home is the standard base camp for climbers on the south side. Rangers staff and overnight at their Forest Service tent on weekends throughout the primetime climbing season of spring and early summer. A full rescue cache is kept, along with standard base camp amenities to keep rangers safe, warm and comfortable while patrolling and hosting climbers on the iconic 14,179 foot peak. Rangers make hundreds of climber contacts daily and assist with knowledge sharing, route conditions, hazard watch out's, leave no trace protocol, human waste packout procedure, permits and passes checks, search and rescue, outfitter guide monitoring, etc. Rangers also maintain all trailhead facilities around the mountain, as well as hiking trails, campgrounds (Panther Meadows), and dispersed camping areas on the lower flanks.

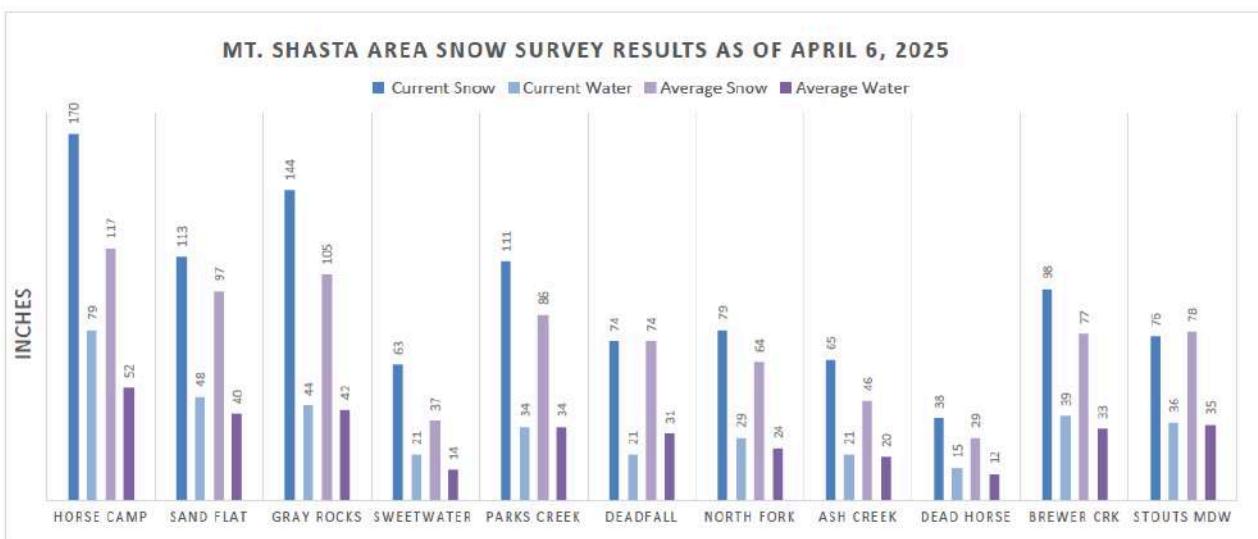


Photo: Helen Lake, 10,400 feet, a typical weekend crowd during spring and early summer climbing season

April 6, 2025

MT. SHASTA AREA SNOW SURVEY RESULTS AS OF April 6, 2025

<u>Sacramento, Shasta and Trinity Watersheds*</u>								
Course	Elevation(ft)	Last Month Snow(in)	2025 Snow(in)	2025 Water(in)	2024 Snow(in)	2024 Water(in)	Hist. Average Snow(in)	Hist. Average Water(in)
Horse Camp	7900	100	170	79	92	27.3	117	52
Sand Flat	6800	104	113	48	100	32	97	40
Gray Rocks	6200	N/S	144	44	130	52.5	105	42
Sweetwater	5850	52	63	21	38	12	37	14
Parks Creek	6700	102	111	34	75	26	86	34
North Fork Sac	6900	N/S	79	29	72	29.6	64	24
Deadfall Lakes	7200	73	74	21	77.9	31.4	74	31
Averages of Courses Sampled			2025 Snow(in)	2025 Water(in)	2024 Snow(in)	2024 Water(in)	Hist. Average Snow(in)	Hist. Average Water(in)
		108	39.4	83.56	30.1	82.9	33.9	
Percent (%) of Historic Average		130	116	101	89			
N/S = Not Sampled Similar Years 1999, 2004, 2019								
<u>McCloud Watershed*</u>								
Course	Elevation(ft)	Last Month Snow(in)	2025 Snow(in)	2025 Water(in)	2024 Snow(in)	2024 Water(in)	Hist. Average Snow(in)	Hist. Average Water(in)
Brewer Creek	6250	83	98	39	96.8	43	77	33
Stouts Meadow	5400	57	76	36	72	32	78	35
Ash Creek	5000	N/S	65	21	65.2	29.6	46	20
Dead Horse	4500	N/S	38	15	40.1	15.9	29	12
Averages of Courses Sampled			2025 Snow(in)	2025 Water(in)	2024 Snow(in)	2024 Water(in)	Hist. Average Snow(in)	Hist. Average Water(in)
		69	27.8	69	30.1	57.5	25.0	
Percent (%) of Historic Average		120	111	119	121			



Our Program & Accomplishments....

Current climbing, avalanche and weather information – www.shastaavalanche.org

- **USFS Climbing Rangers on the mountain, serving the public and protecting Wilderness, 7 days/week**
- **The Human Waste Packout bag program** – over 2.5 tons of waste is transported off the mountain each year. Free waste bags are purchased and provided to climbers
- **Trail Maintenance** – Five climbing rangers perform 100+ hours of trail maintenance a season
- **Sewage pumping at trailhead toilets** – 3,000 gallons per year are pumped from the trailhead vault toilets
- **Maintenance and cleaning of trailhead toilets** – Climbing rangers perform 2-4 times weekly maintenance and cleaning of Wilderness trailhead toilets at Bunny Flat, Clear Creek, Brewer Creek and North Gate
- **Garbage Removal** – Approximately 6 tons of garbage is removed from trailheads and Wilderness each year
- **Road Maintenance** – Select years: roads rocked, re-graded, improved drainage, new culverts for north and east side trailheads
- **Search and Rescue by USFS Climbing Rangers** - MOU with Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department; Air resources through California Highway Patrol
- **Safety and Education to climbers** – About 5-6,000 climbers attempted Mt Shasta this past season, about half make it to the summit. Climbing Rangers provide crucial information to thousands of people each year, highlighting climbing safety, avalanche awareness and wilderness ethics. Youth education programs provide learning topics such as Leave No Trace, Wilderness ethics and backcountry safety and history/lore.
- **Maintaining Mt Shasta Summit Register** – Maintenance of summit register and archival into the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, California
- **Siskiyou County School Groups:** Organized by Rebeca Franco, summer and Fall education programs are accompanied by rangers and continue with Siskiyou County elementary and middle school groups. Students embark on a 3.7-mile round trip hike to the Shasta Alpine Hut (Horse Camp) with wilderness, flora, fauna, geologic and avalanche/climbing based topics discussed. Out of 171 students, 131 visited Horse Camp for the first time!

Climber safety and sanitation on Mount Shasta is a primary focus of the climbing ranger program. Through boots-on-the ground patrols, education programs and trailhead maintenance and service, the climbing rangers make contact with thousands of visitors, informing them on mountain safety, wilderness etiquette, weather warnings, climbing route hazards, federal rules, regulations and the fee demo program (summit pass) compliance checks.

Visitor Use - By the Numbers...

Bunny Flat and the south and west side routes of Mount Shasta continue to be most popular. The Clear Creek route on the east side comes in second, followed by Northgate, Brewer Creek, Old Ski Bowl and lastly, Sand Flat trailhead.

Mt. Shasta Summit Collections for FY 2025

Fee Tube Collections

Site	Number of Sales	Total Sales
Brewer Creek	58	849.00
Bunny Flat	854	23,444.23
Clear Creek	663	18,642.64
Mt. Shasta Office	334	8,651.80
North Gate	65	1,755.01
Old Ski Bowl	6	182.50
Sand Flat	0	10.00
Total	1,980	53,535.18

Mt. Shasta Summit Pass Sales

Type of Pass	Number of Passes	Total Sales
3 Day Pass	335	8,362.50
3 Day Pass-Senior Discount	0	0
3 Day Vendor Sales	1590	35,775.00
Annual Pass	138	3,405.00
Annual Pass Senior Discount	1	15.00
Annual Pass Vendor Sales	260	7,020.00
Total	2,324	54,577.50

Summary for Mt. Shasta Summit Collections

Source	Number of Sales	Total Collected
Fee Tubes	1,980	53,535.18
Pass Sales	2,324	54,577.50
Bunny Fee Machine	~1,350	36,770
Grand Total for FY 2024	5,654	144,882.68



Search & Rescue

In 2025, we concluded the year with 1 search, 9 rescues, and 2 fatalities. These numbers are consistent with our long-term averages based on comprehensive records dating back to 1997. Most rescues occurred in Avalanche Gulch on the south side of the mountain, as well as in the Green Butte/Sargents Ridge area, Shastina, Cascade Gulch, the Hotlum/Bolam route on the north side, Clear Creek on the east side, and one incident in the Castle Crags Wilderness. The majority of incidents took place between May and September.

Subjects involved were predominantly males between 30 and 50 years old with intermediate experience levels. The most common causes of incidents were slips, trips, and falls on snow, rock, and ice—patterns that align with historical trends. Unfortunately, two fatalities occurred this year, both on the Clear Creek route. Although Clear Creek is considered Mount Shasta's easiest route, poor weather and limited visibility can lead climbers off course and into steep, glaciated, and hazardous terrain. Detailed narratives for both incidents are available in our Search and Rescue Narratives document.

Search and Rescue operations on Mount Shasta continue under a formal MOU between the U.S. Forest Service Climbing Rangers and the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department, which serves as the lead agency for all SAR activity within county boundaries. Climbing Rangers conduct most rescues near and above treeline, supported by Sheriff's Office deputies and volunteer SAR teams. We value this long-standing partnership and the shared commitment to safe, effective operations.

Helicopters remain an essential resource for SAR missions on Mount Shasta. The California Highway Patrol Northern Air Operations Division, based in Redding, continues to provide critical aerial support. This year, CHP aircraft operated within Wilderness airspace for 9 of the 12 incidents. Helicopter evacuations remain one of the safest and most efficient methods for

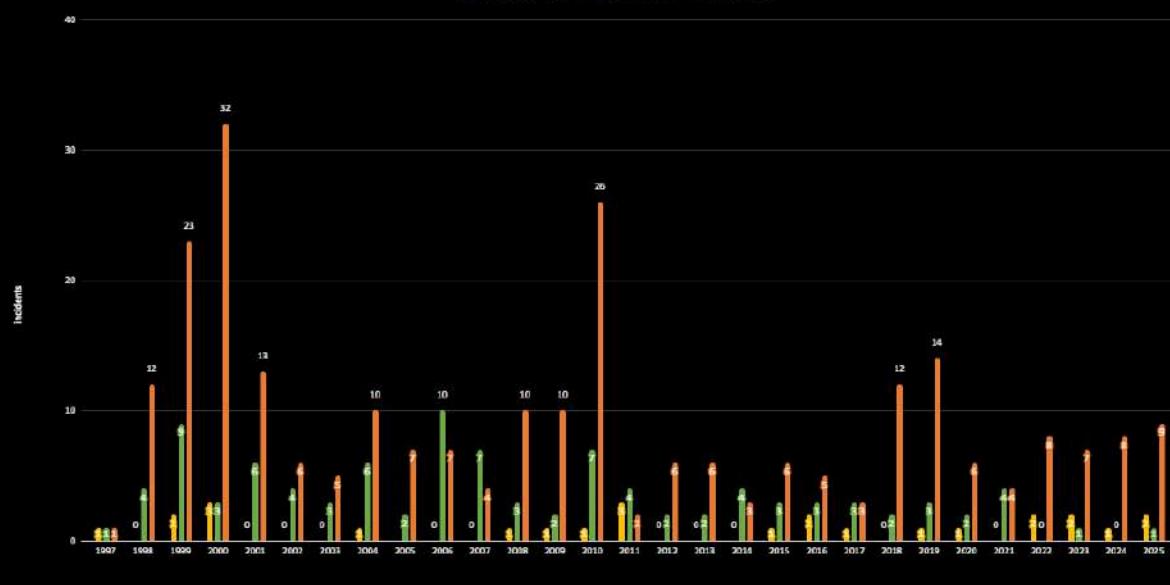
transporting rescuers to the scene and moving patients to higher levels of care.

Each year, Forest Service Climbing Rangers host the Interagency Mount Shasta SAR Helicopter Training, and 2025 was no exception. Participating agencies included the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department, U.S. Forest Service, California Highway Patrol, outfitter-guide services, and others. This training is essential preparation for the climbing season, giving pilots and crews the opportunity to review mountain weather considerations, common landing zones, hoist operations, aircraft capabilities, passenger safety procedures, and more. We appreciate the continued collaboration among all participating agencies, as well as the special Forest Service authorization required to use mechanized equipment for non-emergency training within the Mount Shasta Wilderness.

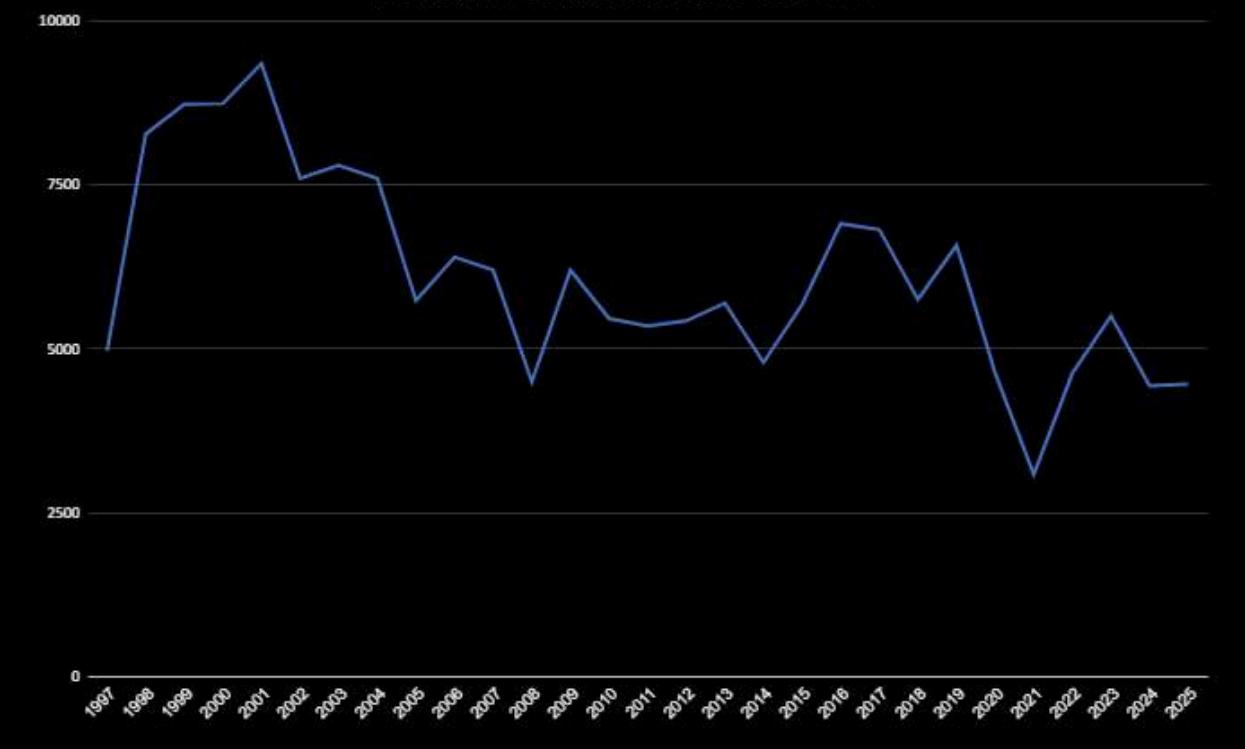


Mount Shasta Search & Rescue Statistics 1997-2025

■ FATALITIES ■ SEARCH ■ RESCUE

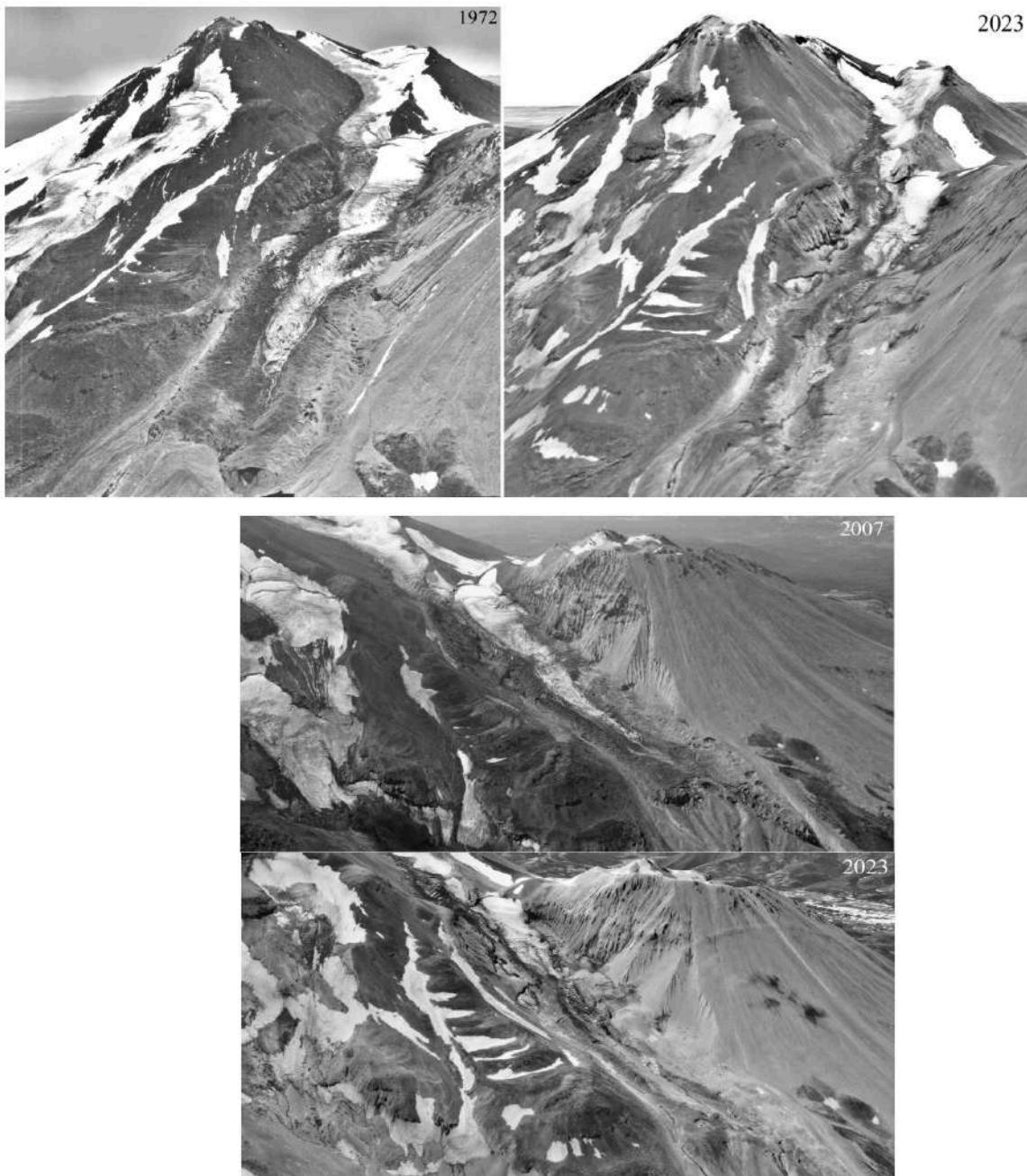


Mount Shasta - Summit Passes Sold - 1997-2025



The Glaciers and Snowpack

Phil Rhodes, friend of the program and citizen scientist, continues to help photograph and monitor Mount Shasta's glaciers. His lust for this work is of immense value and he offered these words and photo comparisons: "Thanks to an above average snowpack and a relatively cool summer, the glaciers did better this year than since at least 2019. The Hotlum in particular had one of the best net snow accumulation years in a very long time. Wintun, for some odd reason, did poorly."



SnowCrestSnowCam 2022/07/10 18:34:20

10 July 2022



SnowCrestSnowCam 2023/07/10 17:39:46

10 July 2023



SnowCrestSnowCam 2024/07/10 14:36:47

10 July 2024



SnowCrestSnowCam 2025/07/10 15:57:18

10 July 2025



2025 Shasta Alpine Hut Site Manager Report

Submitted by Steve Eddy, Site Manager on 11/30/2025

The 2025 season, delayed this year by access problems as Everitt Memorial Highway remained closed at McBride Springs up until the end of April, started on 4/25/25 with Rick Chitwood shoveling through over 10 feet of snow to dig out the spring. With the help of guides from Shasta Mountain Guides the toilet was excavated enabling us to remove the compost and get the toilet open on 4/25/25. A few weeks later Shasta Mountain Guides pulled the compost off the mountain on sleds. The summer trail was wanded on 7/8/25. The spring was winterized on 10/9/25. The scaffolding/snow fence was put up on 10/22/25 and the toilet was closed down on 11/9/25.

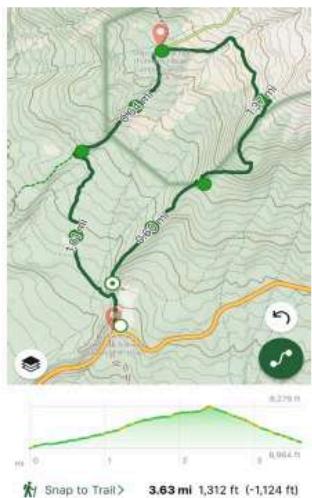
Water and compost samples were collected from the spring and the bottom of the compost bin on 4/29/25 and sent to Spring Street Analytical in Klamath Fall for testing. The spring water tested negative for E. coli and coliform bacteria; both were present in the compost. Reports are attached.

Over the course of the season, caretakers welcomed visitors from 48 states and the 33 countries listed below.

Argentina	Australia	Belarus	Bolivia	Bosnia-Herzegovina
Brazil	Canada	Chilie	Columbia	Costa Rica
Czech Republic	Denmark	Ecuador	France	Germany
Hungary	Iceland	India	Jordan	Mexico
Mongolia	Nepal	New Zealand	Peru	Scotland
Slovakia	Sweden	Switzerland	Taiwan	The Netherlands
Tibet	Trinidad	Ukraine		

Caretakers

We are building a cadre of experienced, devoted caretakers. Eleven caretakers worked at the cabin this season, all but 2 returning from previous years with anywhere from 1 to ten+ years of experience. Caretakers were scheduled at the cabin 6 days weekly in May, 5 days weekly in July, 3 days weekly in August, and weekends only in September. The first scheduled caretaker day was April 22nd; the last was September 25th. Caretakers worked 95 days over the course of the season, averaging 7.9 hrs/shift.



The Vista Trail

The Vista Trail was completed in July 2025. It heads east from the cabin, crosses the climber's gully and switch backs up Green Butte Ridge to join the trail back down to Bunny Flat. This is the final section of a loop trail beginning and ending at Bunny Flat. This was a volunteer project of Sierra Club Foundation spearheaded by Rick Chitwood. This 3.6 mile loop gaining 1312 feet from the Bunny Flat Trailhead is proving popular with hikers.

The loop route is pictured to the left.

Camping on SCF Property Although we have no way to accurately track the number of people camping on SCF property, caretakers survey camp sites towards the end of their shifts, counting the number of tents and checking to see whether they belong to guided groups or private parties, thus providing a very rough idea of site utilization. Data collected is summarized in the table below. Per the usual pattern, the vast bulk of the camping on SCF property was by guided groups doing multi-day climbs during May and June, the peak climbing season. 249 tents were counted in May and 107 in June. Usage of the site for camping plummeted after avalanche gulch and west face climbing season ended.

Composting Toilet

The toilet opened on 4/25/24 and closed for the season on 11/9/25. Total operational days were 199, six less than in 2025. Even though the toilets were open a few days less than last year, year over year usage increased. Bathroom usage (half of total door count) increased from 4673 or 72% of the 20 year average in 2025 to 5716 or 88% of the 20 year average in 2026.

For the past two years, the solar panel charging system struggled to keep the batteries charged. Although replacing the batteries last year appeared to fix the problem, we again saw battery voltage falling midsummer this year. Replacing the solar controller on 7/27/26 did not help. A few weeks later, Rick Chitwood cleaned the solar panels on the roof of the bathrooms and replaced one. Since that time, charging amperage increased significantly and the system functioned well, keeping the batteries charged without difficulty.

Bathroom utilization peaked during the May/June climbing season as illustrated by the graphs below.

Overall Site Usage: Once Avalanche gulch and westside climbing seasons end and suite utilization by guided groups stops, on site camping and utilization of the bathrooms drops off significantly while visits by day hikers increase. Other than for anecdotal observations by caretakers we have no way to reliably measure site and trail usage. Rick Chitwood placed a trail counter on the summer trail below the cabin a few years ago, to measure this, but it turned out not to be reliable and was taken down. It would be interesting to try this again, to get a picture of usage on the summer trail to the cabin and on the other trails leading from the hut.