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## Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks News Release

**For Immediate Release:** May 2, 2012

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### Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Requests Court to Allow Commercial Pack Stock Use in Wilderness Immediately

The National Park Service (NPS) has requested permission from the U.S. District Court to allow Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (Parks) to issue commercial use authorizations for pack stock operations in the Parks' wilderness immediately. This is part of ongoing actions by the NPS to resolve litigation over commercial pack stock use in the Parks, while minimizing potential impacts to the Parks' visitors, pack stock outfitters, and local communities.

#### **Background:**

- The High Sierra Hikers Association (HSHA) filed a lawsuit against the NPS in September 2009 alleging that the Parks 2007 General Management Plan violated the NPS Organic Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Wilderness Act regarding continued commercial pack stock use in the Parks.
- On January 24, 2012, U.S. District Court Judge Richard Seeborg ruled that the NPS violated a procedure in the Wilderness Act, but did not violate the NPS Organic Act or NEPA.
- Judge Seeborg's ruling directed that the NPS does not have the authority to issue commercial use authorizations (permits) for pack stock operations in the Parks' wilderness, pending completion of a separate ruling on remedy for the violation. As a result, the NPS is obligated to respect the court's January 24, 2012, ruling. Therefore, the NPS has not issued permits for pack stock operations in the Parks' wilderness this year and cannot do so until further determination by the court.
- The NPS has followed the judicial process and schedule as required by the court in resolving this matter and did not refuse to take, or otherwise delay, any action towards asking the court for immediate relief to issue permits to commercial pack stock operators as soon as possible.

- The court's ruling is specific to commercial pack stock and does not involve administrative or private pack stock operations in the Parks.
- A court hearing to determine remedy for the violation, including consideration of the NPS' request to issue commercial pack stock operator permits immediately, is scheduled for May 23, 2012.
- While there is no guarantee that the court will allow continued commercial pack stock use in the Parks, the NPS has notified commercial pack stock outfitters that applications for the annual permits for 2012 are being accepted in advance of the court's ruling. This will help expedite issuance of the permits, if allowed, pending the court's upcoming determination.

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## **SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS**

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, which lie side-by-side in the southern Sierra Nevada in central California, serve as a prime example of nature's size, beauty, and diversity. With the world's largest trees (by volume), grand mountains, rugged foothills, deep canyons, vast caverns, and the highest point in the lower 48 states, it is a place that attracts 1.6 million visitors a year from across the U.S. and the world. Visitor activities vary by season and elevation. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/seki](http://www.nps.gov/seki) or call 559-565-3341.