



Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks News Release

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Update on Search for Missing Hiker, Larry Conn, at Kings Canyon National Park and the Inyo National Forest

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, CA – On Saturday, October 27, a total of 40 staff from the Inyo County Sheriff's Department and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, in cooperation with the California Highway Patrol, were involved in the search-and-rescue operation for missing hiker, Larry Conn, a 53-year-old man from Pacific Palisades, California. Efforts included an increased number of ground search teams (nine), three dogs, and two helicopters (AStar B3 contract helicopter and one California Highway Patrol helicopter.) Search efforts were focused on specific high-probability areas around Pinchot Pass, Taboose Pass, and Split Mountain, including likely travel corridors/camp locations. Conditions continued to be challenging with snow (up to 1-1/2 feet), ice, high elevations (8,000-13,000 feet), and cold temperatures the mid-40s in the daytime to the low-20s at night (degrees Fahrenheit). The search is expected to continue on Sunday. Managers continue to evaluate any new information to determine the direction of search efforts over the next days.

Background:

- On Friday, October 19, 2012, Conn started his hike at the Taboose Creek Trailhead in the southern portion of the Sierra Nevada in the Inyo National Forest with plans to travel over Taboose Pass toward the John Muir Trail in Kings Canyon National Park. His route may have included Split Mountain and areas to the south, including Pinchot Pass. He planned to return to the Taboose Creek Trailhead on Monday, October 22, 2012. (*See flyer.*)
- Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks received a report of the overdue hiker, Conn, on Wednesday, October 24, 2012, at approximately 10:00 a.m. from the Inyo County Sheriff's Department. The

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Sheriff's Department had located Conn's vehicle at the Taboose Creek trailhead and organized a search in the Inyo National Forest. Conn was reported to be two days overdue in returning from a weekend backpacking trip in the area between Pinchot Pass and Mather Pass. Conn planned to enter the area by hiking over Taboose Pass and exploring the areas around Pinchot Pass and/or Split Mountain.

- On Wednesday, October 24, the Inyo County Sheriff's Department sent a search team up Taboose Pass and used a California Highway Patrol helicopter to search the area. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks contracted an AStar 350 B3 helicopter to fly search missions and insert search teams. Another helicopter, which was involved in a research project in the area, assisted in the search effort by looking for clues in the course of its regular business. The area was largely covered in snow from a storm over the weekend. Helicopter reconnaissance saw numerous animal tracks, but no human tracks, in the snow in the search area or on routes out of the search area.
- On Thursday, October 25, crews returned to the area to search likely camping areas around Bench Lake and the Bench Lake Ranger Station. Ground searchers swept the trail from Cedar Grove up the Woods Creek Trail. Aerial searches continued throughout the area and included the use of the AStar B3 and a National Guard Blackhawk helicopter with forward looking infrared, which is imaging technology that detects thermal energy. Investigators were contacted by a person who spoke with Conn on October 19, as Conn was beginning his trip. The individual said that Conn expressed an interest in the Pinchot Pass area. Neither the ground teams nor the aerial searchers found any evidence of people hiking in the search area. Two notes were found posted near the LeConte Ranger Station, but neither note was written by Conn.
- On Friday, October 26, more ground teams and helicopters continued to search the area. Ground teams were assigned to hike and search in particular areas and stay overnight. The aerial search continued, including the contract B3 helicopter and another National Guard Blackhawk. No more clues were discovered on Friday.