A History of the

Dinkey Allotment

Sierra National Forest

U.S. Department of Agriculture

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INTRODUCTION

Near the center of California's 1.3 million acre Sierra National Forest, stands Dinkey Creek and the surround Dinkey grazing allotment. Located about 65 miles northeast of Fresno, the general boundary of the allotment embraces about 62,000 acre of national forest land, along with another 11,000 acres of private inholdings.

The Dinkey area includes a wide range of mountain terrain, where altitudes range from about 3,000 feet to over 10,000 feet. With a large network of south-facing sloping rangelands, the allotment holds a unique place in the evolution of livestock grazing on the Sierra and in the mountains of California.

The general region possesses a vast and varied human and natural history reaching all the way back to Indian times. Through the ages, these lands have provided not only timber, minerals, foods, fibers and hides along with other natural resources. The land and water of the Dinkey Creek area provide habitat for fish and wildlife. In some ways, these lands also contributed to recreation and tourist activities within the Sierra, with a wide variety of campgrounds, summer camps and homes, along with hunting and fishing opportunities.

As with other rangelands, the Dinkey allotment helped shaped the character of the American West and the Sierra cowboy and rancher. As such the range has touched the lives of many pioneers and pathfinders, adding to the economic and social well being of those who followed the early sheep and cattle drives.

The Dinkey Allotment cannot be viewed as a solitary unit or isolated event but only in a larger and regional context. Nation-wide there are about 10,000 grazing permits on the 155 forests or rangelands of the National Forest System. All of these permits are part and particle of what is essentially a continuing experiment in resource management as it concern grazing on public lands. In turn, this effort have given rise to range, soil, and wildlife sciences that have continued to refine the land management process. Through the years the effectiveness of these management efforts have been the subject of intensive study, examination, and, at times, controversy.

Under the Forest Service's new ecosystem management guidelines, some rangeland ecosystems may not functioning as they should. Some additional study and changes may be needed on the Dinkey Allotment. It is the intent of this reviewer to provide a historical perspective of past activities so any changes or corrections can be made in an enlightened, prudent and responsible manner.

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE --

For unknown hundreds of years, the mountain region surrounding Dinkey Creek was the traditional range of the American Indians, a linguistic group known as the Western Monos. During an extended summer season, these indigenous people would occupy the surrounding mountain area, hunting and gathering for much of the year.

Then in the early 1800s, with the first Spanish penetration of the San Joaquin Valley, the Indian populations and way of life began to change. While the famed Spanish explorer Gabriel Moraga did not reach the Dinkey Creek area, he made numerous explorations of the valley and foothills below, sighting and naming both the San Joaquin and Kings rivers. After the Mexicans displaced the Spanish, the Mexican were displaced by still other Anglo American explorers and trappers.

Although the trail is faint and inconclusive, the first possible exploration of the Dinkey Creek area by an white American occurred in the winter of 1845. In an abortive and ill-conceived effort to link up with other members of his advanced party, explorer and adventurer John Charles Fremont attempted to cross the Sierra at the onset of winter. Historians believe Fremont's group of 16 men forced their way up the north fork of the Kings River to a spot near Blackcap Basin. After being caught in a snow storm and stalked by Indians, Fremont's men managed to make their way back to the valley - after having possibly viewed the McKinley Grove of Big Trees.

It was, however, the discovery of gold at Sutter's mill in 1848 that brought massive and ever-lasting change to the land called California. That discovery, spurred by the ageless dream of sudden wealth, unleashed one of the greatest migrations the world had ever known. Thousands of new comers descended on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, seeking the magic metal, often identified as the Great California Gold Rush.

Instead of gold many of the prospectors found only hardship and privation. For many miners the Great Gold Rush was a cruel hoax. As the realities surfaced, disappointment and disillusionment set in. It was against this troubled background that many of the gold seekers turned to endeavors that would sustain them. Some became farmers, merchants or craftsmen. Others turned to the tall trees and began providing the lumber needed to build a new state. An inordinate number of those early argonnauts turned to cattle ranching. Since the days of the Spanish and Mexican rule, ranching had been the foremost industry on the western frontier. From the onset of western migration, a handful of settlers began claiming the mountain meadows of the Sierra, using the pre-emption act at first, and later, a variety of federal land acts that were drafted to encourage western migration.

When the Civil War burst upon the nation, the Union found itself cut off from the traditional supply of cotton. Forced to use wool, the overnight demand prompted many of the cattle ranchers to turn to sheep. In addition, sheep required less attention, which also encouraged the change. The ranchers also became aware of California's capricious climate, with droughts and deluges occurring frequently but without any cyclical pattern. Against this background, the rancher began looking at the high mountain meadows, which might sustain their flocks. The first known effort toward an annual migration to the mountains of eastern Fresno County occurred in the early 1860s when two valley ranchers took the livestock to what is now known as the Shaver Lake area. As the number of animals multiplied, the competition for the mountain meadows became fierce. In the drought years, every meadow was contested because its grass and water meant survival. This competition invariably led to disputes and in some instances violence, and the little-known grass wars of the Sierra. These disputes involved the established stockmen, who felt they had proprietary rights based on their historical use of the range. The transient herder, often Basque or some other minority, felt the public lands should be open to all on a first-come basis.

The Sierra grass wars took on many dimensions. The most publicized incident occurred in 1891 when John Shipp killed two Portuguese herders on "his range" near Blayney Meadows. The 1901 tragedy of "Graveyard Meadows" speaks to a similar incident where three herders were reported killed. Much on the enmity toward the foreign-born herders was racism, other aspects could be attributed to their grazing practices. Besides cropping the range grass to bare soil, the herders touched off numerous forest fires in their attempts to improve grazing the following season by burning the forest on their departure each fall. Both practices were seen as a direct threat to the Sierra watershed. The grass wars ended with a strange twist, leading to the demise of the sheep industry in the Sierra. By 1890 most people recognized that there had to be a better way to protect the public lands from misuse. Reform came slowly however. In came to a climax in 1890 when Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant national parks were established. In 1893 the Sierra Forest Reserve was created but it was not until several years later that any regulations banning grazing were imposed

The sheepmen did not give up without a fight. They took their fight to the public and the press. The battle went on for years. Many herders flaunted the ban and continued to sneak their animals into the high country. Finally, in 1905 the Forestry Bureau of the General Land Office was transferred to the Department of Agriculture under pioneer conservationist, Gifford Pinchot, launching efforts to define conservation and the prudent use of natural resources.

INTERPRETATION --

The history of the Dinkey Creek area and The Sierra National Forest, interpreted in the context of modern ecological knowledge, represents a segment of a century long "management experiment" on public lands. Unfortunately here were few early efforts to establish scientific or quantifying controls. Many of the records of the human activities are inadequate or missing. Against this background, any conclusions, however implied or construed, must be regarded as provisional.

THE DINKEY ALLOTMENT --

The trail of those early pioneers who first moved their livestock to the life-sustaining meadows within the Kings River drainage is a faint one, clouded by time and shrouded by a lack of historical records.

It can be assumed that the Euro-American visitors to the Dinkey Creek area can be tied to the early miners who came looking for gold in the "Southern Mining District of the Mother Lodge some time after 1850.

The Dinkey Creek area did not acquire an identity until around August of 1863 after a small dog "Dinkey" apparently put valor before reason and went up against a grizzly bear - with tragic results - but even that event is laced with discrepancies.[1]

The trail of the first stockman is no more defined. John G. Simpson, a gold rush Forty Niner, settled on Big Dry Creek and began to supply beef to the residents of Millerton, Fresno County's first county seat.[2] Patterson, a native of Georgia who settled in eastern Fresno County in 1853, may have led the way. From the few records available, Patterson, began taking his livestock cattle into the mountains along the north fork of the Kings River early on. With no maps to guide his way, Patterson used a neighboring peak to mark his way - a mountain that would one day bear his name.[3]

Another pioneer, Henry Akers of Kentucky settled in around Centerville in 1852 and then moved up to the foothills, seeking the lush spring range and tributary waters of the Kings River. But even the waters of El Rio de Los Santos Reyes were not enough to

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1 Farquhar, Francis; Place Names of The High Sierra; Sierra Club, 1926, p. 6. This account varies with his Exploration of the Sierra Nevada, p. 37, which maintains that the small dog belonged to Frank Dusy.

2 Winchell, L.A.; History of Fresno County and the San Joaquin Valley; A. H. Cawston Publishing, 1933, p.86-88.

3 Gudde, Erwin; California Place Names; University of California Press, 1972; p. 240.

offset the extended summer season. These early settlers soon learned that the only way to preserve their animals from recurring droughts was to drive them to the Sierra, where the meadow grass provided sustenance.

Other pioneers joined the progression, including loggers, settlers and a few market hunters. Two stockmen identified only as McCrea and Darby apparently grazed sheep above Pine Ridge around the Civil War period. Another pioneer, Frank Dusy arrived in Fowler around 1864 and tried his luck at a wide variety of endeavors, including livestock. Somehow he managed to make his way to Dinkey Flats, were he built a small cabin. In the late 1860s, he met William Helm, a Fresno businessman and rancher, who hired Dusy as a herder and then made him something of junior partner. Together, their sheep grazed much of the north and middle fork drainages, a territory that became known as Helm's Big Meadow and Dusy Canyon. Their partnership flourished and continued until 1874, when it was dissolved amicably; Helm helped Dusy become independent and establish his own flocks as well as a sheep shearing facility.[4]

About the same time, D.C. Sample of Academy, joined the mountain migration and began pushing his animals to the area around 1872.[5] A native of Mississippi, Sample had come to Fresno County as a young man without means. In the Dinkey Creek area he found lush forage that was readily accessible from his winter and spring ranges in the foothills. Through thrift and hard work Sample had become a large land owner and amassed a substantial fortune. In 1904 he sold off his sheep and switched to cattle. Over time, Sample and his wife had 11 children; several of his sons and son-in-laws also became cattlemen.[6]

Other pioneers took similar paths, leading to the meadows they came to know as their own, including such names as Fleming, Statham, Collidge, Maxson meadows and other landmarks such as Rodger's Ridge and Ross' Crossing. There was also the Blasingame Range, founded by Jesse Augustus Blasingame who first settled in the Auberry area around 1863 and then moved to the Millerton area. In most cases, these early stockmen gained access to the mountains by way of a toll road that had been scraped out of the mountainside above Tollhouse - despite what many considered outlandish tolls - such as 10 cents for each sheep. By the early 1870s, Dinkey Meadows had become the sheep camps for not only Dusy and Sample, but for W.W. Shipp, Hal Nelson and Henry Ross. By the end of the decade a wagon road had been established to the site.

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4 Vandor, Paul; The History of Fresno County, The San Joaquin and Sierra Nevada, Historical Record Co., 1909, p. 157.

5 Evaluation Narrative, Dinkey C & H Allotment, Kings River District; John A. Lorenzana, USDA Forest Service, 1990.

6 Vandor, Paul; History of Fresno Co., Historical Records Co., p. 652.

As the competition for the mountain ranges mounted so did the abuses. The drought of 1869-1871 underscored the fact that the Sierra Nevada had become the summer grazing range for sheep and cattle. In 1872, Frank Dusy saw some herders bringing their flocks to the meadows before the snow even disappeared. The meadows were wet and soft with the grass just starting to grow. "The sheepmen were in too much hurry this season, each trying to get ahead of the other, and the result has not been very beneficial," he noted.[7]

In 1875, a lone wandering vagabond - a former sheep herder - made his way into the area, looking for the rumored grove of Big Trees near Dinkey Creek. Undoubtedly his passage went unnoticed at the time, but John Muir would go on to become the foremost advocate for the protection of the Sierra Nevada, his " Range of Light." In particular Muir railed against the barren landscape left by sheep, disparaging them as "hooved locust."[8]

By 1877, one observer estimated that there were 180,000 sheep grazing the mountain meadows east of Fresno.[9] Other abuses were occurring up and down the Sierra. Muir's allies noted the forests were falling at an alarming rate - to a combination of homesteaders, timber thieves and "sheep fires." As the depredations increased so did the calls for reform. Muir and other concerned citizens found allies with farmers in the San Joaquin Valley who fretted about the damage to the watershed and its impact of the future of agribusiness. Finally in 1890 the California Board of Forestry petitioned Congress to act. While the theft of timber was bad enough, the loss was "insignificant compared with the standing timber and young forest that is annually swept away by the combined evil agencies of fire and sheep," the board declared.

Three years later, President Benjamin Harrison signed an executive order establishing the Sierra Forest Reserve, the sixth and largest reserve in the nation. The creation of the reserve produced no immediate reaction from the stockmen. For the first five years there was no effort to patrol the lands or restrict entry. As the abuses continued, Congress was eventually forced to hire patrollers. It was not until 1898 that 60 men - most of them foothill cowboys - were hired for the summer months and began some limited enforcement of the grazing ban on the reserve. The protests from the stockmen were immediate and loud. As they saw it, the reserves were simply "locked up" public lands, where nothing could occur.

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7 Fresno Weekly Expositor; July 10, 1872, p.3.

8 Muir, John; Son of Wilderness; Houghlin-Mifflin, 19??, p.

9 Vankal, John L.; The Early History of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks as it pertains to Vegetation, June 1968, p.7 CSUF, Madden Library, Special Collections.

In 1902, Charles H. Shinn was appointed chief ranger of the Sierra Forest Reserve and set up his station in his North Fork cabin. His foremost task involved the implementation of a grazing permit system. As soon as his office began making allotments, some of the resentment toward the government eased. The 1903 allotments apparently utilized the grazing privilege forms of 1897, which held that the stockman could not corral animals within 500 yards of a stream, resort or reservoir supply - period. There were few other restrictions unless specifically noted. In the absence of any detailed maps, the question of actual allotment site or rangeland must have risen. Such specifics were glossed over, with vague references as in the "N.W. Dist." of the reserve. The major effect of the new system was to ban all sheep grazing on the reserve; the number of cattlemen who could use the public range was also controlled. Although there are no figures to quantify the effect of new policy, it undoubtedly reduced the number of animals grazing on the reserve. The days of the free range or grazing had ended.

In trying to explain the new grazing regulations, Shinn and his wife met considerable opposition. The permits were free the first year but a fee was imposed thereafter. It rankled the stockmen that they now had to pay for what they felt was theirs by right of possession. And is some areas, the rancher learned that there were not enough permits to go around. The sheepmen took the brunt of the new regulations - whether fairly or unfairly. Faced with the new exclusion, many including Sample and Blasingame switched over to cattle. A few ignored the rules and continued to play hide and seek with the rangers. Others simply quit, opening many ranges to cattle.[10]

Across the rangelands of the West tensions remained high, however. Some of the ranchers who had been using the ranges for years felt they had been denied a permit unfairly. At Mariposa for example, the county grand jury accused Shinn of issuing permits unfairly, and sought his removal from office. Having lost the Yosemite area to a park in 1890 the ranchers felt they could not lose anymore grazing land and reacted. They could see the open range disappearing before their eyes and didn't like what they were seeing.

As a young cowboy, Lee Marvin Rice of Watts Valley saw the last of the open range days and the arrival of the first allotments in 1903. On the north fork of the Kings River, he recalled, a large "community range" was established. This range was about 15 miles wide and about 40 miles long. Four foothill cattlemen managed to obtain permits for this range, including his

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[10] Ashes From Dead Campfires, the unpublished recollections of Sierra cowboy Lee Marvin Rice, whose family grazed the Sierra from 1889 until well into the early 1900s. Written in the early 1940s. Author's collection.

father John Rice, his neighbor, Charles Maxson - whose name is perpetuated in Maxson Dome - and two other early permittees, identified only as DeMasters and Wakefield.[11]

In mid June, as the snow retreated from the high country, Rice and Maxson made plans to drive their combined herds of 500 animals to the summer range. From Watts Valley they went to Tollhouse and then up the steep grade up to Pine Ridge and Shaver. Over the next three days they moved their animals up the mountainside to their planned destination east of the Dinkey Lakes. Once all four permittees were in the area, they gathered at Rice's camp on Helm's Creek and made their own land allocations, relying on the natural drainages. Wakefield and DeMasters took the area around Post Corral Creek. Maxson took the area around Maxson Dome, while Rice held the area to the west, including Helm's Meadow. Unfortunately, there is no known early record of the other community ranges, including the adjacent Dinkey allotment.

Nationwide, the first fledgling step toward range protection came with the first grazing allotments. The next move accompanied the 1905 Transfer Act, which moved the Forestry Bureau from the General Land Office and put it into the Department of Agriculture under pioneer conservationist Gifford Pinchot. Within a few months he issued the first "The Use Book" that outlined a brief but prudent policy for use of the reserves. For instance, on page 77 of that book, it stated that livestock should not be admitted to the forest ranges when the ground was soft and likely to be damaged by the animals' hooves.

In the spring of 1907, Roy Boothe of Mariposa passed the recently imposed Civil Service test and was hired by Shinn. He was then assigned to the recently established Kings River District under District Ranger Dehl. At that time, Boothe recalled, there were several cattlemen using both the summer and winter ranges within the district. The stockmen were also getting together for an annual spring roundup or rodeo. "I had considerable training in handling cattle on the open range and the fact that I rode a stock saddle built by the best saddle maker in California, and was riding a promising hackamore colt, helped materially in my being accepted by these stockmen as one of them. Most of them had come originally, or their parents before them, from Tennessee or Kentucky, and brought the spirit of Southern hospitality with them. They soon accepted me and made me feel perfectly welcome in their homes or their camps."[12]

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11 Rice, Lee Marvin; an undated, unpublished autobiography, "Ashes From Dead Campfires; author's collection.

12 Boothe, Roy, Personal Narrative, written at the request of forest pioneer Gifford Pinchot, Feb. 1940. Walter Puhn collection.

At that time, Boothe pointed out, there was no range management science to guide the rangers. Whether it was forest or range management - or the lack of it - it was basically trial and error - or something learned from the back of a horse, that is, "horseback science." He noted there were two permittees on the Dinkey Creek allotment, and that the range has a "carrying capacity of about 700 to 800 head of cattle." Gradually, the emerging experiments that would be identified as forest and range management were evolving. Other disciplines were also appearing under the banner of forest conservation or forestry, including timber cruising and fire suppression.

In August of that year, Boothe received additional on-the-job training in fire suppression when a big timber fire broke out on Dinkey Mountain, eventually blackening thousands of acres. "We got some valuable aid from cattle permittees, who in that district were always fire-protection conscious, and strongly opposed to the light-burning tendency so prevalent in much of the mountainous sections of California. We also employed some crews from the logging camp some 10 or 15 miles distant." Instead of confrontation with various forest users, a spirit of cooperation began unfolding across the forest.

During this first summer season the rangers occupied tent quarters. The original ranger station was about a half mile from the cow camp of the Dinkey cattle permittees. In the spring of 1910 it was decided to develop a permanent station and Supervisor Shinn gave his approval to the construction of a log cabin and gave us "the magnificent appropriation of $5.00 with which to finance it. Along with his subordinate, a ranger identified only as Downey, the two went to work. "We hewed the logs, rove our own shakes, built our fireplace, and highgraded from an old abandoned logging camp enough lumber to use for flooring, sheeting and ceiling. The $5.00 was spent for nails," Boothe explained.

As early as 1907 - perhaps even earlier - Shinn's office began preparing annual grazing reports for what had become the Sierra National Forest. Hog grazing, poisonous plants, predatory animals and range conditions were reviewed. New permittees were coming onto the district. Changes in the boundaries of some of the ranges were being made. Besides locational names, the allotments had been assigned numbers. In 1908 for example, the report observed that Maxson's 150-head permit had been transferred from Range 37 to Range 43 to alleviate overstocking on the old Helms range. Concurrently, Ranger Gene Tully, one of the Sierra's early rangers who had assumed the grazing responsibilities, and a man identified only as Howard began mapping the ranges, including the permittees names, address and their summer and winter ranges.[13]

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[13] Grazing Report on the Sierra National Forest for 1908; SNF Supervisor Office.

In 1910, the Sierra National Forest undertook one of the first range assessment in the West. Organized by Supervisor Maurice Benedict and utilizing the expertise of Tully. Among other things the survey attempted to identify the grass types and any noxious plants that would be detrimental to grazing livestock. Apparently their survey covered all the newly mapped ranges; unfortunately their report has either been destroyed or lost.

In February of that year, W.C. Sample, a second generation permittee, made application for a permit to graze 200 head of cattle from June 1 to Oct. 1 in the Blue Canyon and an area known as Alpines, which was evidently part of Dusy's high mountain camps. When the actual permit was issued, it noted that a $60 fee had been paid. Among other things, the permit noted that Sample had 120 acres of summer grazing land and 2,310 of winter range in the area east of Academy. Some time in this period, the Forest Service had tied the summer allotment to the winter and spring range, setting in place another policy.[14]

Around 1908, the Sierra Forest began counting animals entering the range, after some of the rangers became suspicious of relatively low permit numbers against those that were observed on the range. There were some short counts. Boothe observed that the grazing permittees on his district were the "salt of the earth" and gave forest officers little opportunity for criticism or complaints. There were exceptions, however, including Thomas J. Ockenden, a British raised New Zealander who operated a store, butcher shop and other facilities below Shaver Lake. Around 1915, however, Ockenden bought out one of the early permittees for Stathum Meadows range. He had some peculiar habits that were not only foreign but offensive to many of the stockmen. At roundup time, for example, his cowboys had specific orders not to assist the other stockman in separating their animals - in direct contradiction to the spirit of cooperation among the stockmen.

"There was a holding corral at Dinkey where all the cattle enroute to their summer ranges were held overnight, and counted out by me in the morning. One spring, in counting Ockenden's cattle, I found that he had approximately 100 head more than authorized by his permit, which as I recall, was for 700 at that time. When I told his range manager that my count showed that he had more than authorized by his permit, he admitted that my count was correct and said that he had told Tom when he made his application that he should apply for 800 instead of 700. On my next visit to Pine Ridge for mail and supplies, this matter was taken up with Mr. Ockenden, who flared up and became very angry because I seemed to question his integrity.

"I told him he could do one of two things: fill out and submit an application for an additional 100 head, which the range

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14 Grazing Permit issue to W. C. Sample, March 21, 1910; Range Office, Sierra National Forest Headquarters.

was qualified to carry; or remove them immediately from the Forest. The cost of the latter would have by far exceeded the grazing fee, which was only 40 or 50 cents per head at that time. He declared that he would gather 100 head and bring them out; but when I started to leave the store he called me back and said that he wanted to apologize to me, and that if I would permit him to he would gladly fill out the application for the additional 100 head," Boothe recalled.

Many other events had also touched the Dinkey Creek area. Shortly after the turn of the century, the Fresno Flume and Irrigation Co. began building a logging railroad from their Shaver mill toward Dinkey Creek. Over time the rail was extended. By 1912 it had reached a spot near Blue Canyon. Other smaller mills also began moving toward Dinkey Creek. But the lack of an adequate wagon road slowed access. The situation was compounded during the winter of 1910-1911, after the storm washed away three small ridges and undermined other sections of the road.[15]

In the fall, Boothe and (Ranger) Baker came back to the station to set down the wires around their pasture and sow some grass before closing the station for the winter. "They awoke the next morning to find the ground white and the snow coming down in good shape. So a stove was borrowed from one of the cattlemen's cabins, the stove pipe was stuck out of the window, and housekeeping for the winter began. The snow continued to fall for three days, and kept about eight inches deep, so it was decided to sow the grass seed on the snow. When seen this spring, there was a pretty good stand of timothy. Nearly an acre has been sown to orchard grass this spring, and this is also getting a nice start," the Sierra Ranger newsletter reported.[16]

Around 1910, the Forest Service established Dinkey Creek as an administrative district, District 6, bringing the first measure of control to the area. Forest-wide other progressive steps were also taking place. Boothe said one of the more positive events occurred when the service instituted a series of ranger schools or conventions. At that time there was no forestry or range sciences to guide the early rangers. With the conventions, promising young rangers were brought together to discuss mutual concerns and practices, including grazing, he noted.

Even after the allotments came onto the scene, the livestock men still had to work with the vagaries of the weather. "The heavy snow which fell on the first of October (1916) caused a loss to many stockmen. Many cattle perished in the storm, while those that were caught and won through looked worse than when they went in the spring," a subsequent edition of newsletter observed.[17]

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[15] Sierra Ranger, Vol. 1, No. 3, Aug. 1, 1911, p. 16.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Sierra Ranger; Vol. VI, No. 3, Nov. 1, 1916, p.12.

As the allotment system became established, the advantageous location of Dinkey Creek manifested itself. Over time it became the center of grazing activities for much of the Kings River area. It served as a staging area for cattle drives to more distant allotments, including, Helms Creek, Post Corral, Blackcap, Crown Valley, and Woodchuck.

The fall round-ups were often trying times for the cattlemen. After summer on the range, many of the herds had scattered far and wide. "About September 25th we started to gather the range horses. This took about ten days. If we had an early snow or much rainy weather it took a little longer. Then a crew of cowpuncher was recruited . . . By that time the weather was getting pretty cold. Each morning the frost looked like young snow . . . Then came a four-day trail drive to the home ranch in the foothills," Rice wrote of the Helms allotment roundup.

Two sweeps were usually required to collect the scattered cattle. Some of the early herds contained mean "Mexicano steers," which were difficult if not dangerous to work. In most cases those steers had to be brought out on the end of a rope. "The round-up boss assigned Ed Simpson and Lynn Akers and myself to this job, and did we have fun. All riding big horses, those Mexicanos were snaked out hitting the ground about once every 20 feet. This was rough treatment, but as neither Kellogg (the stockman) or his son were much on a horse, they had to depend on the roundup to get their steers. When we finished the roundup that year (1915) there were still about 30 head of steers left on the range. These he sold to John Chambers and Ed Simpson at $20 a head, quit the cow business and left the hills. Of these animals about 20 were caught and the rest shot. Those were the last Mexicanos to hit the Kings River ranges."[18]

During World War I, the office of Range Management in Washington DC directed all regions "to go as far as they could" to help the stockman boost production of meat and hides.[19] Sheep were also permitted to graze selected areas of the Sierra high country. In a 1917 report on the Dinkey Allotment, Ranger Angus E. Clark reported that four different permittees grazed 842 head, including Chambers and Simpson, with the grazing season running from June 1 to October 31.[20]

Other realities of range management also appeared. Many of the problems associated with the old grazing practices died hard. Boothe noted that both Dinkey and Crown Valley permittees were keeping their cattle on the summer ranges as late as possible, trying to save the feed on their winter ranges. "The Dinkey

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18 Rice, op. cit.,; p. 31.

19 Boothe, op. cit., p.29.

20 Report on Dinkey Allotment, 1917; Angus E. Clark; SNF.

permittee drove the last of theirs out of Muleys Hole and Oak Flat country about December 10th this year. The fact that the permittee stay until this late date makes the season that stock are actually kept on these allotments as least two months later than on the average summer allotment in this Forest."[21]

As problems appeared, periodic changes were made to the grazing permits. The boundaries and carrying capacities of the allotments also underwent changes. The problems never went away. Frequently cattle from one allotment would drift into an adjacent allotment putting additional pressure on the range. Forest Service figures indicate up to 2,000 head of cattle from adjacent allotments migrated through the Dinkey allotment. The issue of range conditions forced the closure of one range as early as 1919. The annual grazing report noted that one section of the Kings River range within Game Reserve I-E had been partially closed against grazing." The potential impact of grazing on deer herds had been recognized.[22]

From 1921 through 1925, John Chambers, L. S. Houser and J. T. Simpson and son grazed about 950 heads of cattle on the Dinkey allotment. Edwin Simpson replaced Houser in 1926 and the permittee put 1,200 head on the range until 1930, when the number was reduced to 950 head. From 1931 to the late 1940s, various members of the Simpson family were the only permittee, grazing from a maximum of 750 head to a low of 650 animals. During this period the grazing season was reduced to June 1 to Sept. 15, as it remains today.[23]

During the 1930s, Forest Guard Ed Steen served at the Musick Creek station near Shaver Lake. Now 93 and retired in Fresno, he remembers counting the animals as they came onto the forest in late spring. "Those drives were huge affairs, sending up tell-tale dust clouds into the air, long before the animals got to the holding corral. I used to count the animals as they passed through so we could know how many were going onto the various ranges. Some of the names I have forgotten but there were the Simspon, Blasingame, Sample, Armstrong, Akers and Lassotovitch. A Fresno sheepman by the name of Echeverria also grazed his flocks on the Edison land around Shaver Lake," Steen recalled.[24]

Other visitors and forest users had also discovered Dinkey Creek. The first major sawmill was established around 1924. In the mid 1920s, the City of Fresno established a municipal summer camp on the east side of the creek, using a special use permit

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21 Report on the Crown Valley Allotment, Kings River District, 1917; Roy Boothe; SNF files.
22 Annual Grazing Report - Sierra National Forest, 1919; p. 14; SNF files.
23 Dinkey Allotment Narrative, op. cit..
24 Conversation with Edward P. and Doris Steen, Dec. 9, 1994.

issued several years earlier. Despite a relatively poor road between Shaver Lake and Dinkey Creek, the camp soon became a mecca for Fresno families. A small campground and a summer home tract had been established earlier. During this time, a road gradually pushed up the mountainside from Balch Camp. In the mid 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps, a Depression borne federal program, established work camp at Oak Flat. Corpsmen not only built a new ranger station and a new truss bridge, but extended the McKinley Grove and rebuilt the Fence Meadow lookout.

At the onset of World War II, the Forest Service increased the carrying capacity of all the allotments, trying to spur beef production. Forest Supervisor Maurice Benedict noticed that the higher meadows were not being grazed. Thinking that the addition of more cattle would push some of the cattle onto these ranges, Benedict overstocked the allotments. Somehow the animals didn't heed the message. Benedict's plan backfired. Instead of moving to higher meadows, the cattle simply congregated and impacted the lower ranges. Benedict's successor, Kermit Linstedt saw the damage and ordered a marked reduction in the carrying capacity of all the Sierra ranges, including Dinkey allotment. Forest-wide the animal month was reduced from 88,947 to 46,196 a.m.. The Dinkey allotment dropped from 650 a.m. to about 400 head.[25]

In 1954, Simpson sold his permit to Ted Forbes. Together with the Olive Mendenhall family the two permittees grazed a total of 240 head. In 1962, the Blue Canyon range was pulled out of the Dinkey allotment, with Forbes using the Dinkey range and Mendenhall on the Blue Canyon range.

After the war, recreation and timber harvesting exploded throughout the greater Sierra. These activities were overshadowed by the construction of Wishon and Courtright reservoirs in the 1950s, ushering in a new era for the Dinkey, and north fork Kings River country. By adding to the inventory of man-made lakes in the Sierra National forest, the projects inundated two historic grazing areas, Collidge and Maxson meadows.

Although Frank Dusy stands as the area's first packer, a long line of other packers have made their way to the Dinkey Creek area. Each in their own way, affected the grazing scene. In the early years, the tourists fretted about the lack of feed for their animals - while the permittee complained about their free use of the meadows. In 1916, Jay Robinson, a professional packer from the valley, sought a special use permit from the Forest Service to develop a store, hotel, barn and feedlot at Dinkey Meadow. He was apparently followed by Jim Kline or the Meyers brothers. Ted Anderson of Auberry took over in 1926, when he moved the station

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25 Range Allotment Analysis, Sierra National Forest, 1944; and Dinkey C & H Allotment.

to its current location.[26] In post World War II, continued good hunting and fishing prompted Dave and Erdeen Fraga to operate the pack station. Another packer, Ray Crabtree came onto the scene after Courtright Reservoir was completed, with stations at Pole Corral and Courtright Reservoir. The horses and mules from these operations were counted in the Dinkey and Helms allotments.

A cost benefit analysis of grazing on either the Dinkey Allotment or Sierra forest forest itself has not been done. Forest officials acknowledged that the cost of administering the grazing program is not met by the fees collected. No historical record can be found showing how grazing fees have been adusted for inflation or changing uses on the forest. Increasingly, new regulations along with the increased costs of doing business are forcing some permittees from the range. From the onset of the allotment system, the fees were kept low to aid the settlers who practiced subsistance agriculture and kept animals on the forest year-round. In 1908, for instance, Supervisor Shinn recommended that the annual be set at 50 cents for cattle and 70 cents for horses.[27] Today the grazing fees are set by Congress, thousands of miles away from many of the grazing allotments.

In the 1970s, a series of Congressional measures forced all 155 national forests and rangelands to re-examine many of their traditional uses, and undertake a massive land planning effort. Other mandates were also imposed on the forest, which affected the Dinkey allotment. The Sierra added a fisheries biologist to its staff in the 1970s, trying to address the concerns of environmentalists and sports groups. Among other things, these groups alleged that national forests had been managed for the benefit of commodity production, such as timber and forage - at the expense of fish, wildlife and recreation.

Increasingly, public land management is being driven by a combination of political forces that may nullify or overwhelm efforts toward ecosystem management.

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26 Theodoratus Cultural Research; Review of the Historic Resources of the Dinkey Creek Hydroelectric Project, 1982, p.24.

27 1908 Grazing Report, Sierra National Forest; Supervisor Office, Sierra National Forest.

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