

Accomplishments or outstanding work

1. Evening training series: The park staff and mountaineering concessioner's continued with an evening training series in 2013. The two sessions were planned and presented by a small group made up of staff from each entity. The trainings focused on scenarios, small groups, and hands-on demonstrations. The trainings were very successful and the additional benefits of the social interaction off the mountain. Thanks for your support and involvement of the evening training series.

2. Challenging route conditions: Warm weather this summer made for very challenging route conditions in August and September. IMG increased their route work on the Muir route, and coordinated proactively with the other two climbing concessioners and the NPS to ease congestion on the route.

3. Field reports reflected very positively on the Concessioner's operation. Some examples of the outstanding work done by IMG guides this year include the following:

5/24/13 Friday afternoon I arrived at Camp Muir and IMG had already left to approach Ingraham Flats. Due to the extreme nature of the potential avalanche hazard I called IMG on the radio just to check in. Lead guide Erica Engle responded with a great positive attitude and talked about their plan, and checked back in over the radio as their plans changed.

Their team decided to turn around and come back to Muir rather than push to the Flats due to a big snow pocket on the east side of Cathedral Rocks. Since it was Memorial Day Weekend, the public shelter had the potential to be busy, so IMG tented on the snow in camp.

This IMG team did a good job communicating and also including their clients in the planning and facilitating of their changing itinerary.

6/4/13 While on a summit climb, rangers received a radio call from lead IMG guide Dan, stating that he had a client who had lost all vision and was suffering from nausea on the summit. He requested NPS assistance. The communication was excellent between guides and rangers. Dan did a great job of keeping rangers informed of his status, and that of his client. Once rangers arrived on scene, Dan did a great job of informing us further of the situation, and taking into account what rangers wanted to see happen from this point on. Dan and the other IMG guides also did a good job of keeping their healthy clients warm, and happy, as well as informed of the plan. Never at any time were clients left unattended, or without a guide on their rope team. Overall the team work between the rangers and the guides went very smoothly.

Also, prior to the incident, IMG guides did a great job of ensuring client safety while around Camp Schurman, ensuring clients properly stored food to prevent fox issues, and ensured that their clients were informed on human waste disposal while at Schurman.

6/6/13 Ran into an IMG climb from Liberty Ridge as they were descending the snowfield. Lead guide Erica Engle spent time providing good information about route conditions on her climb and later submitting a written report and photos for conditions updates on our blog. She also took the lead in helping two independent climbers make an unexpected bivy high on Lib Ridge when some weather came in on them. It is definitely good to have experienced guides around to lend good advice in faraway places.

6/25/13 Lead guide, George Dunn, on an IMG climb through Camp Muir decided to change his trip's itinerary due to unsafe conditions. His scheduled camp for the second day of their trip was Ingraham Flats, and due to high winds, low visibility, and new snow accumulation, decided to stay at Muir instead of ascending. George communicated his team's decision with the rangers at Camp Muir, and discussed alternatives too. Due to lots of public climbers in the public shelter IMG elected to set up tents and not inconvenience any other climbers. Due to their team of climbers staying, Camp Muir had 84 climbers total in camp. Still well within the 110 person limit.

We appreciated George's good communication and flexibility, and also commend the prudent decision to keep his team low on the mountain during stormy conditions.

7/6/13 Lead guide Chris Meader. I interacted with this group both at Camp Muir and Saw them on the climbing route and Ingraham Flats. Guides had good interactions with rangers, coming to our hut and conversations about plans and route conditions. Standard trip, good training time with clients at Muir, good climbing awareness/ethics on a crowded route.

7/18/13 Rangers observed lead guide Justin Merle of International Mountain Guides and his group on the Kautz Glacier route. IMG guides were lowering their clients down a steep, rocky section of the route to ensure their safety. Justin Merle did a great job of explaining to his clients what they were doing and why, and he also explained this to the rangers. IMG guides used the time while clients were being lowered to discuss safety and double check their clients' harnesses and how they were tied in. Once through this section, guides stepped off to one side and allowed rangers to pass by. IMG guides also left their camp site quite clean, with no traces of their camping there.

8/3/13 IMG team Chris Meder, Craig John, Sara Cohen, and Blair Hutchenson conducted a ground school at Camp Muir with 6 clients. All Guides were very professional during the training. They covered crampon technique, rope travel and self-arrest. All clients were wearing and carrying proper climbing gear. All clients were engaged and appeared to be having fun.

8/5/13 I was staffing Camp Schurman on a Monday and observed Arron and Carl arriving at camp. They were both friendly and approachable. They had traveled ahead of their clients to preset camp. They had left behind other guides to tend to the clients. They asked about route conditions and where we wanted them to set up camp. Both guides seemed to have a good sense of what was going on at camp, but still made an effort to make contact with the ranger staff.

8/8/13 On Thursday, August 8th IMG guides Jason Edwards and Josh McDowell reported a potential incident on the Disappointment Cleaver from their high camp at Ingraham Flats. Guides radioed their headquarters and had them call NPS rangers at Camp Muir. Once informed of the incident, rangers were able to establish radio communications with Josh and Jason. The guides responded from their camp to the location of the potential incident. Once on scene, guides did a great job of informing rangers that the incident had resolved itself, and that they did not need assistance and no action was required by rangers. Excellent job of communication between rangers and guides, and a great, speedy response by the guides to a potential incident. Guides also told the independent climbers that they had responded to that they needed to check in with rangers at Muir once they got down and gave rangers a great description of the climbers and what they're issue was.

8/15/13 Ran into Arron and Carl on the Cleaver on a sunny afternoon. Both guides were headed up to do route work, one had a 12 foot ladder and the other had two 6 foot planks. Even with the large amount of gear they had both guides were practicing good route selection and safe climbing policies. The best part was both Guides still had great attitudes even with their large loads.

8/18/13 IMG guide Aaron Mainer was at Camp Muir and coordinated with the NPS, RMI, and AAI the implementation of a longer ladder for the upper-crossing above the Disappointment Cleaver. He did a great job of communicating the route maintenance implementation and actually did carry a longer ladder and two massive boards up to the problem area on the route. The ladder was installed safely and professionally by IMG. Strong work Aaron!

8/27/13 Rangers at Camp Muir observed lead IMG guides Austin Shannon and Josh Tapp and their team coming back from Ingraham Flats. Guides did a great job of informing rangers of current conditions at the flats, as well as their plan. IMG attempted to move up to the flats from Muir, but due to very poor weather made the decision to return to Muir. Guides knew that it was inappropriate for them to stay in the public shelter, but they asked rangers if this was okay due to the weather conditions. Rangers ensured that there was not going to be any public staying in the shelter, so it was okay. IMG did a great job of keeping their clients in less than half of the shelter, and also swept out the shelter and packed out some trash that had been left by independent climbers. While not a typical situation, guides did a great job of discussing their plan and getting it approved by rangers. The constant communication of both conditions and plans between rangers and guides was much appreciated.

8/31/13 Really good interaction with rangers about route conditions and their plans on how to deal with harder DC route. Spent time looking at photos rangers had taken and discussing options on how to proceed. IMG guides later were able to install ladders and a route through the difficult part, and were the only guide service to get their clients above this very broken section of the route.

9/18/13 IMG has had three trips come through Muir during my current shift. They have consistently been the best about stopping by the ranger hut when they arrive and saying hi, informing us of plans and the guides they have on the mountain.

Future plans for Concession Operation

We look forward to continuing to work with IMG in 2014 to meet our mutual goal of serving the park visitors with excellent service provided in a safe manner that also protects park resources.