

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Velvet Grass in the Kern River Canyon Special grazing restrictions in effect

What is velvet grass and why is it important?

Velvet grass (*Holcus lanatus*) is a perennial bunchgrass native to Europe with velvety gray-green leaves. It is a highly invasive species which rapidly colonizes seasonally wet areas such as meadows, riparian areas and other wetlands. It dominates habitats by producing large amounts of seed and forming dense patches with impenetrable root mats, which make it difficult for seeds from other plant species to become established.

Velvet grass was introduced to North America in pasture seed mixes, and has already reached almost untreatable proportions in other parks in California. It has been quietly invading mid-elevation meadows and riparian areas in the Kern Canyon for several years. Velvet grass has the potential to displace native plants from these areas. These ecosystems are critical for habitat protection, native species diversity, biomass, productivity and scenic vistas.



What is the NPS doing about velvet grass in the Kern Canyon?

Velvet grass was discovered in the Kern Canyon in 2006 near the Kern Ranger Station and at Lower Funston Meadow. A single patch found at Upper Funston Meadow was removed. Surveys also revealed numerous populations on US Forest Service (USFS) lands south of the Kern Ranger Station. National Park Service staff began controlling velvet grass on park lands in 2006 and began cooperative control on USFS lands in 2011.

In 2016, we will continue controlling plants in the park and on USFS lands within five miles of the park boundary using multiple treatment methods. Most treatment is by hand-pulling: an 8-person crew will hand-pull velvet grass near the Kern Ranger Station and Lower Funston Meadow. Some dense patches of velvet grass, up to one acre, will be treated with Rodeo, an aquatically-approved herbicide. We will closely monitor the rest of the canyon for new introductions and will work with the USFS to reduce spread of velvet grass back to park lands. Our goal is to protect native plant communities by stopping the spread to uninvaded meadows and eradicating established populations. Crews are making steady progress: they have stopped new seed production from mature plants and are now focusing on removing the seedlings that grow from soil-stored seed.

Special grazing restrictions in the Kern Canyon in 2016

Temporary grazing restrictions are in effect along the floor of the Kern River Canyon in 2016 to prevent the spread of velvet grass seed from the southern part of the canyon into the northern part of the canyon.

The areas between the park boundary at the Kern Ranger Station and Laurel Creek are closed to public grazing.

Grazing of meadows between Laurel Creek and the Kern-Kaweah River is limited to parties accessing the canyon from the west, north, or east. Parties entering the park from the south passing through USFS lands are required to pack in feed and hold their stock once velvet grass begins flowering.

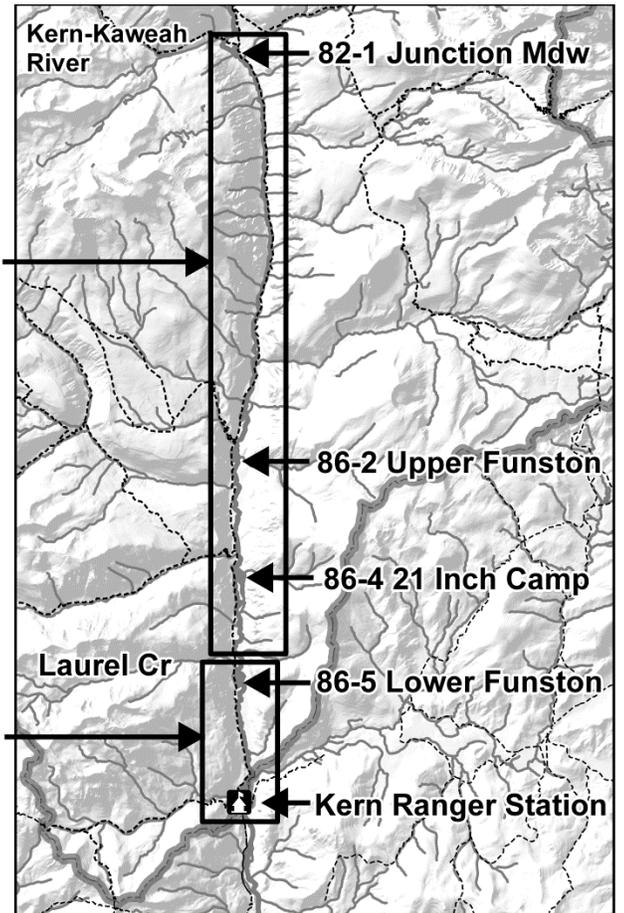
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Special grazing restrictions in the Kern Canyon in 2016 (continued)

Laurel Creek to Kern-Kaweah River: Grazing allowed for parties coming from the west, north, or east.

Once velvetgrass flowers in the spring, this area will be closed to grazing by parties coming from the south where velvet grass is more widespread. Includes **Junction Meadow (82-1)**, **Kern Bridge Camp (86-1)**, **Upper Funston Meadow (86-2)**, and **21 Inch Camp (86-4)**. Grazing at **Upper Funston Meadow (86-2)** is for commercial and private users only.

Kern Ranger Station to Laurel Creek: Closed to grazing except for administrative use of **Lewis Camp (86-7)** and **Kern Station Small Pasture (86-8)**. Includes **Lower Funston Meadow (86-5)** and **Rattlesnake Camp (86-6)**.



How can I help?

Visitors to the Kern Canyon (and throughout our public lands) can help prevent the spread of this invasive weed, and introduction of other non-native plants, by observing a few key precautions.

If you are traveling with pack stock:

- Groom your animals thoroughly before riding on public lands to remove any weed seeds that may be 'riding' on your animals;
- If you carry feed for your animals into wilderness, it must be commercially processed pellets, rolled grains, or fermented hay (e.g., Chaffhaye™), as the heat and mechanical treatment used in processing kills most weed seeds that may be present. This has become a requirement in 2016.
- Baled or loose hay and compressed hay cubes are not allowed in wilderness.
- Feed your animals on a tarp or mantle to prevent seed from being spread; be sure and shake it out into the fire pit before you leave, not on the ground or in a meadow.

When traveling by foot:

- All visitors are encouraged to be weed aware. Take care to clean boots, clothing, and equipment of all mud and seeds before visiting public lands.

Where can I get more information?

For information about weed control and prevention, contact Rich Thiel at 559-565-4476.

You may also contact the Wilderness Information Office at 559-565-3766, or visit: www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness.htm for more information about visiting the wilderness of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Thank you for your efforts and support to keep parklands wild and healthy.