

Drought along the Pacific Crest Trail

By Mary Emerick, High Country News

We had barely covered the first 10 miles of trail, hiking north from the California-Mexico border, when my hiking partner, Flash, and I found the first Pacific Crest Trail casualty. A man in his 20s, face flushed red from heat, watched us approach with clear embarrassment.

He sat in a small patch of shade next to a pack bristling with a solar charger and the latest, most expensive gear. “You wouldn’t happen to have any water, would you?” he asked.

Flash and I eyed each other. We were each carrying six liters, enough to easily take us the first 20 waterless miles to the Lake Morena campground. We had planned our water carry days before. One liter for every five miles, with a little extra to account for the early April heat. It was before noon, and a big climb out of Hauser Canyon awaited us. How much could we spare?

It was impossible to walk away without helping. The hiker watched precious water trickle into his bottle and drained it. We gave him more. That morning he had set off on a journey of more than 2,600 miles, determined to make it to Canada, but a few hours later he had called friends for a pick up at Lake Morena. He was leaving the trail.

Read the whole story