



File Code: 1800

Date: March 17, 2020

Mr. Chris Horgan, Executive Director
Stewards of the Sequoia
P.O. Box 1246
Wofford Heights, CA 93285

Dear Mr. Horgan:

Through this letter I am notifying you that I have decided to terminate your Volunteer Agreement authorizing volunteer services on the Kern River Ranger District. A copy of the terminated Agreement is enclosed.

In managing public lands the Forest Service values the diversity of individuals and organizations that contribute to a common Mission. When working in partnership, my expectation is that the actions and words of our partners, including Volunteers, support our Mission. Anything outside this expectation would be counter to the interests of the American public. When that is not possible, we can no longer consider that relationship to be a true partnership or in the best interest of a multiple use landscape.

Your Volunteer Agreement provides a description of my expectations, including the expectation that you and your members abide by Federal regulations and provide a positive, professional and accurate representation of the U.S. Forest Service. Following one of our meetings where we discussed my concerns with inaccurate, misleading information being shared on your video at Sierra Gateway Market, I appreciated your efforts to edit inaccurate information that was discussed. However, a recent review of your official website found additional instances where inaccurate and inflammatory information is posted which is not in partnership, and does not align with Forest Service Mission, objectives and regulations. Although your website contains the statement, "We support the Forest Service in common sense management of our forest to promote forest health," the continued sharing of inaccurate and misleading dialog is not in the spirit of partnership. A sample of specific inaccurate, misleading information found on your website is provided in Attachment A below, along with corrected information.

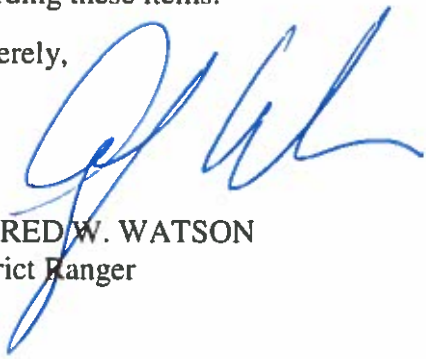
On several occasions my staff and I have met with you and discussed the status of authorized motorized trails in the Piute Mountains. As explained in face to face meetings as well as correspondence dating back nearly 5 years (2015) motorized use is allowed only on roads and trails identified on the 2010 Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Your continued unwillingness to acknowledge the 2010 MVUM's legitimacy does not align with the Agency's regulations and policy, nor does it support efforts to manage motorized use in the Piute Mountains.

Due to the continuation of spreading misinformation, I cannot in good conscience continue to authorize the on the ground work you have performed as Volunteers, though substantial, given your continued misrepresentation of the Agency.



The termination of your Volunteer Agreement will require the following by March 31, 2020: 1. Return all Forest Service equipment that may be in your possession; 2. Submit volunteer hours and timesheets (October – March); and 3. Remove adopt a trail signage on the Kern River District. Please work with Bob Frenes, Assistant Recreation Officer, if you have questions regarding these items.

Sincerely,



ALFRED W. WATSON
District Ranger

Attachment A

Website: www.stewardsofthesequoia.org

1. Website Alerts: Under the tab Alerts is found the following information:



STOP the Pacific Crest Trail Land Grab

Pacific Crest Trail Proposal Seeks to Steal Your Lands

There is a Pacific Crest Trail Association proposal which seeks to create an up to one mile wide Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) corridor in order to provide "more of a Wilderness experience". Yet the PCT is not supposed to be a Wilderness Trail. The PCT is supposed to be a multiple use experience per their own PCT Management Plan. Currently the PCT runs right through multiple use designated motorized recreation areas. The one mile wide PCT Corridor would cut a non motorized restrictive swath right through these areas. The PCT Corridor will restrict all forms of recreation and land management in three National Forests including the Sequoia National Forest.

The PCT Land Grab would:

- Close 30 miles of existing motorized trails which are under consideration for designation in Sequoia National Forest alone
- Decimate a world class motorized trail system in Sequoia
- Remove 21 square miles of lands from multiple use in Sequoia
- Lead to the closure of 20-30% of the existing multiple use trails in the PCT area of Sequoia alone
- Prevent fire breaks which have been needed in the past to stop the burning of private homes
- Prevent fuel reduction needed to prevent future catastrophic wildfires
- Restrict use on private property, even dictating what color cabins must be painted and prohibiting fuel reduction on private property within the one mile corridor or on property that can be seen from the PCT. This has happened to ranchers in other viewshed areas.

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Paragraph 1. Pacific Crest Trail Proposal Seeks to Steal Your Lands:

Inaccuracy 1.1: *There is a Pacific Crest Trail Association Proposal which seeks to create an up to one mile wide Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) corridor in order to provide "more of a Wilderness experience".*

Correction 1.1: The Sequoia National Forest has issued a Revised Draft Land Management Plan (LMP) <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=3375> which contains a proposal for a Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) National Scenic Trail management area. It is not a proposal by the Pacific Crest Trail Association. In addition, the proposed management area is not a one mile wide corridor, but up to ½ mile on either side of the trail within the visible foreground, that is visible from the trail at a height of 5 feet, and using terrain to define the boundaries (LMP, p. 100).

Inaccuracy 1.2 *The one mile wide PCT Corridor would cut a non motorized restrictive swath right through these areas.*

Correction 1.2: The LMP (p. 101) states that, outside of wilderness areas, designated roads and trails within the corridor, including crossings of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail are suitable.

2. Bullet Points- The PCT Land Grab would:

Inaccuracy 2.1: *Close 30 miles of existing motorized trails which are under consideration for designation in Sequoia National Forest alone. Decimate a world class motorized trail system in Sequoia. Remove 21 square miles of lands from multiple use in Sequoia. Lead to the closure of 20-30% of the existing multiple use trails in the PCT area of Sequoia alone.*

Correction 2.1: No existing motorized trails are proposed for closure at this time. To close or change motorized trail designations, an amendment, including public participation, would be needed to the existing Sequoia National Forest Motorized Travel Management designations found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/sequoia/landmanagement/planning>

Inaccuracy 2.2: *Prevent fire breaks which have been needed in the past to stop the burning of private homes. Prevent fuel reduction needed to prevent future catastrophic wildfires.*

Correction 2.2: The LMP (p. 102) includes potential vegetation management approaches within the PCT management area such as prescribed burning, wildfire, herbicides, biological controls, grazing, and timber harvest.

Inaccuracy 2.3: *Restrict use on private property, even dictating what color cabins must be painted and prohibiting fuel reduction on private property within the one mile corridor or on property that can be seen from the PCT. This has happened to ranchers in other viewshed areas.*

Correction 2.3: The Forest Service has no jurisdiction over private property. LMP (p. 102) includes a potential management approach that would place priority on the purchase of lands or interest in lands necessary to protect the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail experience as delineated in the Pacific Crest Trail land acquisition inventory.

3. Alerts- Sequoia National Forest Plan Revision : Under the tab Alerts is found the following information on the Sequoia National Forest Plan Revision 2019
http://stewardsofthesequoia.org/sequoia_national_forest_plan_revision.aspx#

Inaccuracy 3.1: Pacific Crest Trail Proposal Seeks to Restrict All Other Recreation. *In September 2014 the Forest Service released numerous proposals in their Forest Plan Revision including one for the Pacific Crest Trail to create a PCT corridor perhaps one mile wide in which no motorized recreation would be allowed, as well as eliminating all trail and road crossings which are closer than 5 miles apart. .. Stewards of the Sequoia submitted an extensive comment letter on behalf of our members objecting to this draconian proposal which would close 21 square miles of multiple use lands in Sequoia alone.*

Correction 3.1: Refer to corrections 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1 above.



Sequoia National Forest Plan Revision Updated 9/27/2019

Stewards of the Sequoia submitted a comment letter on 9/26/19 objecting to the proposed closure of up to 30 miles of trails due to the expansion of a possible one mile wide Pacific Crest Trail Corridor and other issues [CLICK HERE TO READ OUR LETTER](#)

Stewards are very concerned about the Revised Draft Sequoia Forest Plan and how it will harm recreation. We have been working to defend recreation interests during that past five years within the Forest Planning Process.

The purpose of Forest Plans is to provide the vision for the future of our National Forest.

- They determine what projects will be allowed and which will be a priority.
- They can also discourage certain projects or activities

Here is some information regarding the current Forest Sequoia Forest Plan Proposal and how it will impact recreation.

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4. Alerts- Sequoia National Forest Trail Plan and Trail Inventory : Under the tab Alerts is found the following information on the Piute Travel Management Planning <http://stewardsofthesequoia.org/sequoia-trail-plan.aspx>

Inaccuracy 4.1: *The current push for a one mile PCT Corridor would close over 30 miles of existing historic motorized routes in the Piutes.*

Correction 4.1: Refer to corrections 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1 above.

Inaccuracy 4.2 *...the existing historic Piute motorized trails are analyzed and to seek mitigation addressing any concerns so the trails can be kept open and become designated.*

Correction 4.2: Existing trails illustrated on the 2010 MVUM will not be analyzed unless a change such as allowable use type, season of use, or removal from use is proposed. Other trails may be analyzed for designation but are not currently open.

