

Johns Peak / Timber Mountain Citizens Alliance
P.O. Box 783, Jacksonville, OR 97530

1156

November 12, 2007

Mr. Ed Shepard
Oregon/Washington State Director
Bureau of Land Management
333 SW 1st Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

NOV 30 2007

Subject: Off Highway Vehicles and Western Oregon Plan Revision

Dear Mr. Shepard,

As very concerned residents surrounding the Johns Peak / Timber Mountain area in Southern Oregon, we ask for your assistance in preventing the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) from imposing an Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) area onto our residential communities..

A substantial number of residents and communities surrounding Johns Peak and Timber Mountain have joined forces to give our many communities a voice that must be heard, as individually we were not. We circulated a petition objecting to the BLM OHV plans, and have collected 1,665 signatures to date from registered voters who are residents and property owners in and around the proposed Johns Peak/Timber Mountain OHV area and who currently are or would be adversely impacted by the OHV activity. The petition represents thousands of "affected residents" who, by law (43 CFR §8342.1), have rights that supersede recreational OHV use.

Despite the ongoing protests of 1,665 residents and increasing impacts of OHV use in these residential areas, the BLM appears relentless in continuing to force its OHV agenda. The most recent example of the BLM's agenda is the Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) released in August 2007. The WOPR includes the designation of 13 OHV areas covering more than 100,000 acres in the BLM Medford District including the 16,375 acre Johns Peak Timber Mountain OHV Emphasis Area.

BLM's proposal for designating OHV areas has been, and continues to be, arbitrary and lacks objective criteria to support informed public debate about the appropriate location for OHV-related recreation. Both in meetings with representatives of our citizens group and in recent press reports, the current BLM District Manager has acknowledged this clear lack of criteria despite the existence of federal regulations (cited above) that require that OHV designations must be "based on the protection of the resources..., promotion of the safety of all the users of the public lands, and the minimization of conflicts." For example, in commenting upon the WOPR's current "Preferred Alternative", the BLM District Manager has been quoted in the Medford newspaper as stating: "Essentially, what we did was put in the mix the (OHV) areas being utilized now" (*Medford Mail-Tribune*, 10/29/07) In addition to running contrary to federal law, such an approach de-legitimizes the significant and adverse impacts that OHV use has on local residents, wildlife populations, watersheds and water quality, and traditional recreational uses.

The WOPR DEIS proposes the Johns Peak / Timber Mountain area as an "OHV Emphasis Area". An OHV Emphasis Area is defined as an area managed by the BLM specifically to accommodate motorized recreational activities, and intentionally excluding and not encouraging any other recreational activities.. However, this area has been used by hunters, hikers, and horse riders for many generations and long before OHV's, particularly all-terrain vehicles, were invented. There is substantial historical data to support this claim.

An OHV Emphasis Area designation is completely inappropriate for the Johns Peak / Timber Mountain area because of the checkerboard intermingling of private residential properties and BLM land. Also this area is

literally surrounded on all sides by residential communities. Add to this the presence of highly erosive granitic soils, dwindling wildlife habitat, water-quality impaired streams feeding both the Rogue and Applegate rivers, and the area's designation as an Extreme Fire hazard area by Oregon Department of Forestry, and it is easy to conclude that this is not an appropriate area for OHV recreation. Additionally, this area is along the I-5 corridor connecting the two major metropolitan areas of Grants Pass and Central Point/Medford which is also the natural path of residential growth for Southern Oregon.

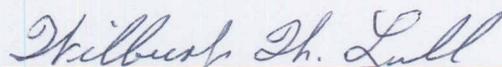
Despite numerous requests by members of our citizens group within the past two years, the BLM has refused to invite public testimony at any of their public meetings on its Timber Mountain/John's Peak OHV Management Plan and DEIS. This is a planning process that the BLM is running concurrently with the WOPR DEIS that would, in effect, establish long-term OHV use and management of the area despite current and significant public dialogue via the WOPR DEIS regarding whether or not this area is an appropriate location for OHV use. We consider the BLM's attempt to push through an OHV Management Plan an outrage and a waste of federal funds until the larger question about the appropriate location of OHV use is addressed via the public process of the WOPR.

Removing the OHV Emphasis Area designation should not mean a hands-off policy, but a proactive approach to protecting the interests of landowners as well as the watersheds, soils and wildlife. Executive Order 11644 and 43 CFR §8342.1 require the BLM and the WOPR to ensure public OHV "compatibility ... with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors." The BLM is not honoring the Executive Order nor the CFR when private homeowners are increasingly subjected to harsh noise and blatant trespassing of OHV riders, when streams in the area are being polluted, wildlife disrupted and fragile soils damaged. It is time for the BLM to eliminate the conflicts as required by Executive Order 11644 and 43 CFR §8342.1.

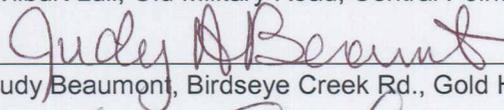
We are hopeful that you recognize the importance of this issue and will actively take steps to ensure that our voices are heard and steps taken by the BLM to ensure the rights of citizens to use and enjoy their property without the intrusion of OHV noise and trespass. We understand the need to provide appropriate places for OHV activity and hope that the WOPR process will provide the necessary forum and dialogue that leads to sound decision making in this regard.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and a continued dialogue with you.

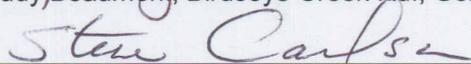
Sincerely,
The Johns Peak / Timber Mountain Citizens Alliance,



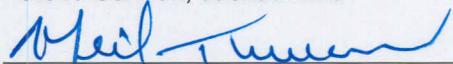
Wilburt Lull, Old Military Road, Central Point



Judy Beaumont, Birdseye Creek Rd., Gold Hill



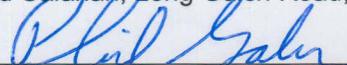
Steve Carlson, Jacksonville



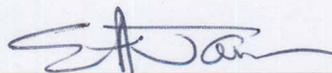
Neil Thureson, Millers Gulch Road, Gold Hill



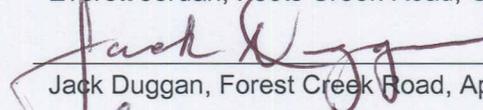
David Calahan, Long Gulch Road, Applegate



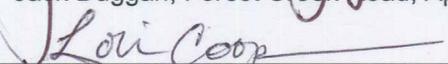
Phil Gahr, Placer Hill Drive, Jacksonville



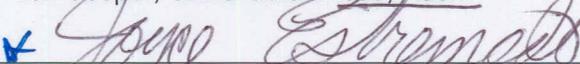
Everett Jordan, Footh Creek Road, Gold Hill



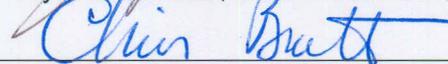
Jack Duggan, Forest Creek Road, Applegate



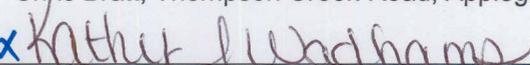
Lori Cooper, China Gulch Road, Ruch



Joyce Estremado, Galls Creek Road, Central Pt.



Chris Bratt, Thompson Creek Road, Applegate



Kathy Wadhams, Hosmer Lane, Gold Hill

Michelle LaFave

Michelle LaFave, Humbug Creek Rd, Applegate

Lori Sterton

Lori Sterton, Colonial Way, Central Point

Mike Higgins

Mike Higgins, Matney Gulch Road, Applegate

Pat Kellogg

Pat Kellogg, Slagle Creek Road, Murphy

This letter is signed by concerned property owners who are a representation of nearly every neighborhood in and around the Johns Peak / Timber Mountain area in Southern Oregon.

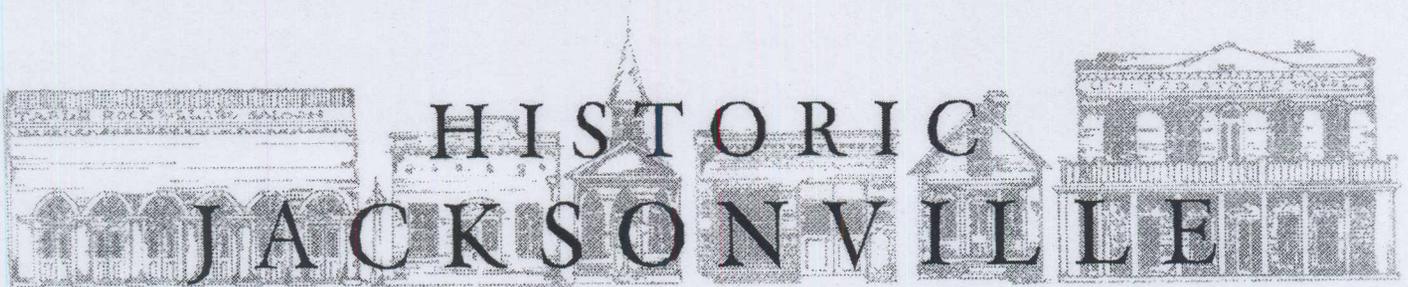
Enclosures:

Petition – 1665 signatures

Map – Petition signers – Johns Peak OHV Consideration Area

Color-coded map of the Johns Peak / Timber Mountain area shows properties of the petition signers (red), BLM lands (buff), and commercial timberlands (green). Please note the jumble of ownership and lack of contiguous lands and access routes to provide a self-contained, isolated, and buffered OHV area.

Note: the petition continues to grow daily as does the number of red colored properties on the map. Printed updates can be made available upon request.



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

April 21, 2006

Senator Gordon Smith
121 SW Salmon Street Suite 1250
Portland, OR 97204

RE: John's Peak/Timber Mountain OHV Park

Dear Senator Smith,

The Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce wishes to voice its opposition over the BLM'S proposal to increase ORV use in the John's Peak District.

The City of Jacksonville will soon be banning ORV use on their 1800 acre Forest Park because of concern over unhealthy noise levels, increased erosion, unauthorized trail formation, unsightly litter, vegetation destruction, uncontrolled drinking, and rider safety. The excessive noise from ORV activities, rallies, and gatherings negatively impact several thousand homeowners, decreasing their quality of life.

The Jacksonville City Council will be declaring the Jackson Creek Forest Park an "official City Park" which will ban any future ORV use.

The temperament of Historic Jacksonville is one of a relaxed, easygoing, restful ambience - a gentle reminder of a simple way of life. Businesses reflect this charming atmosphere delighting everyone. There is no room for "motorized activity" such as that which is proposed. An activity considered to be environmentally destructive and at the same time overtly detrimental to the lifestyle of one of Oregon's oldest historic towns!

A BLM geologist has stated, "The Jackson Creek Watershed, because of its unstable decomposed granite soils, is the worst place in the state to encourage a hillside destination ORV park.

The Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce takes the strongest stance possible in opposition to BLM's plan to make John's Peak into a destination park for ORV riders from around the country.

Sincerely,

Terri Gieg, President
cc: BLM