JANUARY 3, 2008

2531

JAN 2008
Received
District Office
Medford BLM

TIM REUWSATT
MEDFORD BLM CHIEF, MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE

DEAR MR. REUWSATT

WE LIVE IN A RESIDENTIAL VALLEY SURROUNDED BY FORESTED HILLS AND MOUNTAINS OF CHECKERBOARD OWNERSHIP. WHILE THE PRIVATELY OWNED SECTIONS HAVE, IN OUR AREA, BEEN INDUSTRIALLY MANAGED, AT LEAST THE BLM-CONTROLLED AREAS HAVE A FEW NATURAL-LOOKING RESERVE AREAS AND RIPARIAN ZONES WHICH WE REGULARLY ENJOY HIKING IN.

ABOUT A MONTH AGO, WE WERE VERY SURPRISED AND ALARMED TO LEARN FROM A NEIGHBOR THE FULL EXTENT OF THE WOPR PLAN, ESPECIALLY AS WE'RE DIRECTLY BOUNDED ON THREE SIDES BY THE PROPOSED 'ELLIOT CREEK OHV EMPHASIS AREA.' WE CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER WHY WE, AS ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS, ON THE BLM MAILING LIST, WERE NOT NOTIFIED LONG BEFORE THE END OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD. WHEN SOMETHING THIS RADICAL IS SERIOUSLY PROPOSED, SHOULDN'T THE RESIDENTS OF THE AFFECTED AREA HAVE SUFFICIENT ADVANCE WARNING; CONSIDERING, FOR INSTANCE, THE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON PROPERTY VALUES? WE BELIEVE THE HUGE INCREASE IN OFF-ROAD NOISE AND ACTIVITY WOULD MAKE THIS FORMERLY PEACEFUL NEIGHBORHOOD MUCH LESS DESIRABLE IN GENERAL; AND FOR US, PRACTICALLY UNLIVABLE. IN OUR OPINION, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN SUCH AN ENCOMPASSING THREAT TO THE BEAUTY AND SERENITY OF RURAL SOUTHERN OREGON.

WHERE IS THE ONGOING PUBLIC DEBATE ONE WOULD EXPECT OVER SUCH A MAJOR THREAT TO THE QUALITY OF OUR LIFE? WE'VE SEEN VERY LITTLE MEDIA COVERAGE. BY DEFAULT, AT LEAST, IT ALMOST SEEMS

THAT THE BLM IS HOPING TO SLIP THE TRUE MEANING OF THE WOPR THROUGH BASICALLY UNNOTICED, BEFORE THE GENERAL PUBLIC CATCHES ON, AND BECOMES RIGHTFULLY OUTRAGED.

HOWEVER, MAYBE A PARTICULAR SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION HAS ALREADY BEEN KEENLY AWARE OF THE NEW POSSIBILITIES OPENING UP WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXPANSIVE WOPR PLAN. IN OUR GENERAL AREA, FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY CUTTING AND USING A LARGE NETWORK OF NEW OHV TRAILS THROUGH BLM LAND, LINKING MANY POINTS BETWEEN SELMA AND ELLIOT CREEK, APPARENTLY IN ANTICIPATION OF THE RULE CHANGE.

SO, WHY THE SUDDEN NEED FOR ALL OF THESE OHV-DESIGNATED PLAYGROUND AREAS? IT ALMOST SEEMS AS IF A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP HAS DEVELOPED OUT OF NECESSITY BETWEEN THE BLM AND THE QUICKLY EXPANDING OFF-ROAD VEHICLE INDUSTRY: THE DEALERS, MANUFACTURERS, AND THE 5% OF THE PUBLIC WHO USE THESE VEHICLES WOULD HAVE THEIR WILDEST DREAMS REALIZED WITH FULL BLM SANCTION AND FREE PROMOTION; WHILE THE BLM CAN STILL CLAIM THAT IT ADHERES TO THE IDEAL OF MULTIPLE-USE, MAYBE EVEN SHOWING AN INCREASE IN PUBLIC USE, ON ALL ITS NEWLY-CUT-OVER LANDS. SPECIFICALLY, OF COURSE, THESE WOULD BE THE SAME LANDSCAPES, NOW HAVING BEEN RENDERED PRETTY MUCH UNDESIRABLE FOR TRADITIONAL RECREATIONAL USES SUCH AS HIKING, FISHING, CAMPING, ETC.

HOW DOES THE BLM INTEND TO POLICE ALL THE NEWLY CREATED OHV EMPHASIS AREAS? IN OUR EXPERIENCE, LIVING NEAR THE END OF CROOKS CREEK ROAD IN SELMA, THE NOISE LEVEL IS ALREADY HIGH ENOUGH. PEOPLE ROUTINELY RIDE OFF-ROAD WITHOUT MUFFLERS, LITTER, AND SEEM TO TAKE PLEASURE IN CONSTANTLY DISTURBING NEW GROUND; APPARENTLY UNCONCERNED WITH THE SUBSEQUENT EROSION. CONSIDERING THAT WE'VE OBSERVED, WHILE OUT HIKING, ONGOING EVIDENCE OF OHV USE ON TRAILS POSTED 'CLOSED TO MOTORIZED USE', WE WONDER IF THE BLM ACTUALLY EXPECTS TO CONTAIN RIDERS WITHIN THE NEW BOUNDARYS.

THE PROPOSED ELLIOT CREEK EMPHASIS AREA ALREADY HAS SIGNIFICANT DAILY OFF-ROAD USE. WHAT PURPOSE IS REALLY SERVED BY GIVING IT OFFICIAL DESIGNATION?

RESPECTFULLY,

STEPHEN KIRKLAND
Rhonda F. Hampton

2555 CROOKS CREEK ROAD
SELMA, OR 97538