

## Statement for the Record

Southwest District Resource Advisory Council Meeting June 2, 2022

My name is Gregg Esenwein. I am the Treasurer of the Kernan Creek Ranch Subdivision. Kernan Creek is situated along the northern border of the Chutes and Ladders (C and L) parcel. Our subdivision has 14 residential structures and 25 full time residents. In addition, there are two cabins associated with our community that are occupied seasonally. Our homes are located within about .5 mile from the road running through the eastern portion of C and L.

For context, a much larger subdivision – Cedar Mesa Ranches – borders C and L to the east. Cedar Mesa has 139 properties. Approximately 6 residential houses are located in the valley adjacent to C and L, with another dozen or so located along the wooded ridge that overlooks C and L. The remaining properties are located further down the ridge and in the valley to the east of the ridge.

Yesterday's presentation by the BLM during the RAC field trip to C and L failed to adequately address what should be the preeminent concern in any discussion of the appropriate use of the C and L parcel, public safety. Specifically, the potential fire danger to the surrounding residential communities.

The prevailing winds, from the west and south, would quickly spread a fire from the C and L parcel into the neighboring residential sub developments. Some of the homes in these sub developments are located within 1500 ft. of the C and L boundary.

The BLM has told us repeatedly, that living adjacent to public land increases our fire risk. We realize that fact.

However, that's not really the issue here. The issue is whether the BLM will adopt an approach that magnifies the fire threat to the surrounding communities or will it institute a policy that tries to minimize the fire threat.

We think the choice is obvious. Given the proximity and density of the adjacent residential development, the BLM should adopt a land use policy that seeks to minimize the fire threat to the surrounding communities.

Any policy that allows open fires at any time in the C and L parcel is an approach that would significantly magnify the fire threat to the surrounding communities.

We are not the only ones that feel this way. We have submitted, for the record, correspondence from the Sheriff of Montezuma County, the Fire Chief of the Mancos Fire Protection District, and the Fire Chief of the Cortez Fire Protection District. They are all in agreement with our community that allowing fires at C and L imposes unacceptable risks on the homes and the lives of the residents of Montezuma County who live in such close proximity to this small parcel of public land.

The appropriate policy approach to the C and L parcel, an approach that is both consistent with the outlined objectives of the Montezuma Triangle RMZ and consistent with the treatment accorded to the other units in the Triangle RMZ, would be to simply turn the C and L parcel into a no fire and no camping area.

That would reduce the fire threat to the surrounding communities and would also significantly reduce both the time and expenditures that are currently required to patrol the area.

To maximize the enjoyment and use of this parcel, we would support and welcome parking improvements to accommodate horse trailers and other trail users, trail improvements and expansion, and the addition of any other infrastructure that would enhance the experience of trail users.

Visitors who wish to camp in Montezuma County can rest assured that there are plenty of other camping opportunities in this part of the county. For those visitors that seek convenience, there is a large public campground only a few miles away in Mesa Verde National Park and an even closer privately run campground just east of the entrance to the park. For those visitors in search of free campsites, they need only drive 20-30 minutes or so to the Madden Peak Road, the Echo Basin Road, the Transfer Road, the Haycamp Road, or the Dolores Norwood Road.

There are an unlimited number of free dispersed camping sites available along these roads in the San Juan National Forest.

With multiple and unlimited other camping options available, when the RAC considers options for the use of the C and L parcel, the safety of our homes and families should be given greater consideration than simply the desires of visitors to have a free and convenient campsite.

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