

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

SIERRA CLUB

P. O. Box 5396

Fresno, California 93755

8 April 1983

Tehipite Dome by W. A. Starr 1896

Honorable Richard Lehman 1319 Longworth HOB Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rick:

Re. H.R. 1437, the California Wilderness Bill.

As final House action on this bill approaches, I have become increasingly concerned over the avalanche of misinformation which the American Forest Products Company has managed to generate regarding the Pincushion area. The Fresno Audubon Society (FAS) letter of 8 Mar 83 provides a good example.

As a member of Fresno Audubon Society, I was particularly appalled at the ignorance displayed by the letter, and also by the underhanded way in which it has been foisted on Congress.

Let me briefly address the matter of procedure. American Forest Products (AFP) conducted a field trip to the Pincushion area on 1 July 82. Subsequent letters written by participants make it clear that the purpose of the trip was to convince the participants that Pincushion should be opened to timber harvesting. Clair Nelson, a member of FAS, was one of the participants. (Mr. Nelson has told me that he is a personal friend of several timber industry people, and frequently goes on outings with them.) Mr. Nelson apparently had never seen the Pincushion area before. and his exposure was limited to this one-day trip conducted by AFP. But he nevertheless felt that he had become an instant expert on the Pincushion area, and he proceeded to draft the FAS letter which was signed by Tom Edholm, the chapter president. (Mr. Edholm has never been to the Pincushion area.)

Mr. Edholm has told me that the letter was not read to the FAS executive board, nor were its contents summarized for them, nor were copies of it provided to them. His sole basis for claiming that it represents FAS policy is that one copy of it was passed around during a meeting at which it was never discussed. While transacting other business, the board members were supposed to study the three pages of typed material and let Mr. Edholm know if they had any comments.

The board members were not informed that the letter constituted a major reversal of an existing FAS policy which had been adopted by the board in 1978 following extensive discussion. (A copy of that previous policy statement is enclosed.) You will note that FAS previously supported wilderness designation not only for Pincushion, but also for the road from Edison Lake to Onion Springs, and for all of the area east of Granite

Creek (in Madera County). The latter two areas are not included in the present bill, which means that up until 8 March 1983 FAS was asking for a larger wilderness area than that contained in H.R. 1437.

Several of us who are members of the Audubon Society attended a meeting of the Fresno Audubon Society (FAS) Executive Board earlier this week in an attempt to enlighten the Board regarding errors of fact and procedure. Mr. Edholm refused to let the matter be brought up, and essentially invited us to leave the room.

I regret the necessity of describing Fresno Audubon's internal problems to you, but I feel it is essential to an understanding of their March 8 letter. It was written by Clair Nelson, who is a self-admitted friend of American Forest Products personnel. Mr. Nelson is not knowledgable regarding the Pincushion area specifically, nor---judging from the letter---does he understand the wilderness concept in general. The letter was signed by Tom Edholm, who knows even less. The letter was not discussed by their Executive Board, and I believe it highly improbable that it would be supported by a majority of the Chapter's membership.

Regarding the content of the FAS letter, I will be doing an extensive critique. For now I have time only to cover a few major points.

The most glaring error is the FAS representation that Pincushion consists of an extensive tract of large, mature trees with a closed canopy which has choked out other plant and animal species. This alone indicates their ignorance of the area. Differences in soil, slope, and aspect—together with a differential in annual precipitation between the northern and southern portions of the area—have combined to result in considerable diversity of species. As with other parts of the Sierra, fire and other natural forces have caused considerable diversity in size and age class of the various types of vegetative cover. All of these factors have combined to create a natural "mosaic" of species and age classes. The area does not need the benevolent hand of the timber industry to achieve this goal!

Because the industry has told them so, FAS states that "regeneration in harvested areas would be swift and effective." They might try reading a letter (10 July 1982) from Dr. Paul J. Zinke (Professor of Forestry at U.C. Berkeley) to American Forest Products in which Dr. Zinke refers to the present very sparse stocking on some sites possibly being an indication of regeneration problems if the sites were to be harvested. Dr. Zinke also refers to the high temperatures experienced on the predominately west-facing slopes. I believe that high soil temperatures have often been implicated in regeneration failures in other areas. (Dr. Zinke's letter appears as Exhibit No. 1 attached to the testimony of Wickes Forest Industries in the record of the 4 March 1983 subcommittee hearing on this bill.)

In February and March of 1982 we retained a professional forester (Mr. James W. DePree, California license No. 627) to help us in analyzing the draft Sierra National Forest Plan. We asked him to focus his attention primarily on the Pincushion area. In addition to studying the same soil-vegetation maps which Dr. Zinke used, Mr. DePree studied many other

factors which affect productivity of a site. (These factors are enumerated in his report, a copy of which we Express-Mailed to you.) His conclusion was that only 40 per cent of the Pincushion's forested land has a 50 per cent or better chance for successful regeneration. Considering the questionable success of regeneration on much of the land, combined with the area's remoteness and consequent high cost of access and hauling, Mr. DePree concluded that the Pincushion is "unfeasible and unsuitable for timber harvest."

The FAS letter states that Pincushion is unsuitable for wilderness because they feel that it would be lightly used. Without discussing the philosophical point as to whether popularity of an area is an appropriate measure of its suitability for wilderness designation, I would like to point out that the Sierra National Forest staff feels that human use would increase if the area is designated wilderness. Forest Planner John Kruse has stated (11 March 1983) that Prsent Net Value of the area would be at least as great if the area were wilderness as if the area were in timber production. (He may have meant Net Public Benefit. These terms are defined in the drat EIS for the Forest Plan.) In other words, taking non-market as well as market values into account, the Forest Service's own calculations show that Pincushion's value to society as a whole would be at least as great under wilderness designation as in timber production.

One final comment for now regarding the FAS letter. They state that annual "sustained yield" would be 10 million board feet. They mean potential annual yield. And 10 mmbf is the Forest Service figure for the potential annual yield of the entire east side of the South Fork, not just the Pincushion. The Forest Service has stated (March 1982) that 4.85 million board feet would be Pincushion's contribution to the Forest's annual harvest. As you know, there is a significant difference between potential annual yield and annual harvest, with the latter normally being lower. FAS obviously does not understand the distinction. Actually, if the area were to be managed as FAS requests in their letter, the annual harvest would be far less than even the 4.85 figure.

I mention the annual harvest figure only because many people inquire as to what it is. I think what is more relevant is that the figure is very small in relation to Sierra National Forest's total production. Even more important, Pincushion has been a vital part of the San Joaquin Wilderness proposal for many years. For reasons outlined in the record of hearings on California wilderness legislation in previous congresses, the area would make a valuable addition to the Wilderness System which has been supported by many people.

For these reasons we assigned it our highest priority when we were involved in extensive negotiations with the timber industry several years ago. We conceded practically all the other areas which contain commercial timber in order to keep Pincushion in the bill.

The same timber industry people who negotiated with us at that time are now making a mockery of the negotiating process by seeking to get everything we conceded then, and now everything else, too. Yes, everything. Just last week I heard them demanding not only Pincushion, but also the remaining timber in Rancheria.

We have thied to be reasonable during these years that California

wilderness has been under consideration. At the request of congressional staff, we entered into negotiations in good faith. If the timber industry wishes to take not only what was agreed to previously, but everything else too, then there should be reconsideration of all areas, not just Pincushion. We would like to see additional wilderness in the Granite Creek, Crater-Rattlesnake, Deadman and Glass Creeks, Dinkey Lakes, Rancheria, and Kings River areas, to name a few.

If those areas are not going to be reconsidered for addition to the bill, then Pincushion should not be reconsidered, either. An agreement was reached. We urge you to maintain the integrity of that agreement.

Sincerely,

George W. Whitmore Conservation Chairman

P.O. Box 5572 Fresno California 93755

23 January 1987

Sharon Negri Mountain Lion Preservation Foundation P.O. Box 1896 Sacramento, CA 95809

Dear Sharon,

Enclosed are two tapes. Each is recorded on one side only, as I had already rewound the first one when I found that the dialogue was continuing the second hour, so I had to grab a new tape.

Both tapes were recorded from KMJ's talk show with Tom Head (sp?) moderating on 22 January 1987. The first tape ran from about 2:10 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. with commercials omitted. The second tape (with Bill Yeats already signed off) ran from about 3:05 to 3:58 p.m.; I think there are at least three callers in about 26 minutes of running time; I omitted calls on other subjects as well as commercials.

On the second tape "Steve" (I think next to last caller) made a comment about "water balloon" research having come to the same conclusion as everyone else on the program; I found the remark incomprehensible, as did Tom Head. Has there been mountain lion research involving water balloons?

I am also enclosing a copy of the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter's newspaper from January 1986 (a year ago). The lion article by Rich Kangas was based on extensive investigation hehad done regarding the North Fork Kings River research done by Don Neal et al. Note in particular the graph on the last page. The wild swings in per cent of collared fawns killed by lions each year suggests the lack of reliability of the data. But if people such as Don Neal really want to use the data, then I would think they would be interested in the fact that per cent went down steadily and drastically from 1981 through 1985. Instead, I found that last year the "scientists" found it convenient to ignore the data from 1984 and 1985, and instead used the data only through 1983. Apparently they didn't like the more recent data because it didn't substantiate their arguments. I have a call in now to try to get the data for 1986, but would not be surprised to find that it is "not available."

Thanks for your good work.

Sincerely,

Heat got the information:

(George W. Whitmore

Wo new collars were put on favors in 1986, 1987)

and none will be done in 1987. Supposedly because of

lack of money. I wonder if the fact the answers were

cowing out wrong had anything to do with it?