P. O. Box 485 Kingsburg California 93631

26 Sep 78

Dear Barbara,

As I understand it, the NCRCC at its September 9th meeting gave your Yosemite Coordinating Committee two charges. Your committee was asked to come up with recommendations on:

- 1. Policy on the Club's Yosemite properties. This specifically concerned the Soda Springs property, but I presume the LeConte Lodge property should also be considered. In particular, it was apparently desired to get a recommendation regarding the possibility of disposing of the property.
- 2. If the property is to be betained for the forseeable future, then what mode of managing it is recommended?

At the Sierra Nevada Takk Force meeting on September 16, I was interested to note that Lowell Smith apparently had a different reading of the NCRCC charge than I did, judging by remarks that were made.

Thelieve I taped that portion of the NCRCC meeting, and can research the point if you would like. In the meantime, I am presuming my notes which I took at the time are correct, and my first paragraph above--including points(1.) and (2.) -- is based upon my written notes.

In that regard, I presume you would like opinions, so I am offering mine. They are attached on separate sheets for your ease of filing.

I also referred the questions to the Tehipite Chapter's Conservation Committee and thence to its Executive Committee. The points were discussed, and I presume the Chapter's secretary will be contacting you in due course.

I am also enclosing comments on a couple other Yosemite matters, again on separate sheets for your ease of filing.

Sincerely,

## George Whitmore

(I am fully aware that all this falls in the category of "giving advice", but am under the impression that you have difficulty getting people even to do this. That's why I thought you might want some.)

- B. J. Chasteen from G. W. Whitmore 26 Sep 72
- Q. What should be club policy regarding the Soda Springs property? Specifically, should we keep it, sell it to the NPS, or give it to the NPS. Other?
- A. I am in complete agreement with existing club policy concerning the Soda Springs property. This is that we are willing to sell it to the NPS, but we want to receive a fair price for it. (Madley at one time mentioned that this had been discussed, apparently with Dick Pitman, but that NPS acquisition of that particular inholding was not a high priority item.) I believe it has been the intention of the Club to use income from the sale of such properties to build a fund which would be used for a "Nature Conservancy type operation"; I feel this is an excellent use to which such monies could be put, and provides an excellent rationale for wanting to get a fair price.

Some people apparently feel that we should give the property to the NPS, thus setting a good example which might induce other owners of inholdings to do likewise. It might be a veryhoble gesture, but I question whether the value of the public relations achieved thereby would be as great as the value to the Club of cash in the bank. I was certainly do not feel that it would induce even one other inholder to give away his property. - this is simply wishful thinking.

Certainly it goes without saying that we should not relinquish the property without some assurance from the NPS regarding the use to which they would put it. It is possible to make such agreements legally binding. I presume that this point should be explored at an early stage in any negotiations—and my guess is that it has not yet been done.

AA. Assuming we keep the Soda Springs property for the forseeable future, I feel that our managment of it leaves something (much?) to be desired. The array of hostile signs ("Keep Out", "Members Only", "Pay Here", etc., etc.) which we observed on September 17 certainly was very poor public relations. (So was the very large roadside sign out on the main highway, saying "SIERRA CLUB" thataway; I can't help but wonder whether the NPS purposely did this in order to arouse public hostility toward the presence and/or existence of the Club.) I feel it is questionable whether we should be using the property for a private campground—this point needs discussion. If the property is supposedly being managed to provide a point of contact with the public to promote the Sierra Club cause, I question whether this is being achieved. A starting point might be to ask the Lodges and Lands Committee what the management goal is supposed to be—is it possible that this has never really been thought out?

- B. J. Chasteen from G. W. Whitmore 26 Sep 72
- Q. Assuming we retain the Soda Springs property for the forseeable future, what how should we go about managing it? Ie. what organizational structure should be used?
- A. I feel it would be entirely appropriate for the management of this property to come under the wing of the NCRCC. Keep in mind that there has been talk of calling the RCCs Regional Boards; I think the tredn is for the RCCs to become "little Sierra Clubs"-- they need not limit their concerns to matters which are strictly "conservation" in the limited sense, but can logically take a much broader view of what "conservation" consists of.

In the case of management of the Soda Springs property, it is quite clear--through the example that was set by routing of the pipteline--that it is difficult to separate "conservation" from other considerations.

Keep in mind that, in the case of other Club properties, it has been the policy to turn the management of them over to the local chapter. It is grossly inconsistent for the Yosemite properties to continue to be managed by the Board of Directors (through its Lodges and Lands Committee). I might point out that because this is the way it has been done in the past, conservation matters in Yosemite have been referred by the Board to its Lodges and Lands Committee.

The Board simply has no business sticking its nose in Yosemite matters—whether it be running a water line to Soda Springs or deciding whether or not there should be a bridge across the Merced River. But the Board will continue to meddle, just as it has in the past, unless someone else makes it clear that they can, will, and should be doing it.

Your Yosemite Committee could farm out the technical aspects of managing Soda Springs, but the policy aspects of its management should be directly under your wing--primarily because of the difficulty of separating "conservation" from "other" issues.

Both Cole Wilbur and the present Soda Springs caretaker gave you a number of good ideas for personnel to help in managing the property. It seems to me to be a matter of incorporating the Yosemite portion of the Lodges and Lands Committee into your committee; the same people simply would be responsible to you instead of the to Ray Sherwin or Mike McCloskey (coming up in the world, aren't you!) If some of these people are getting tired of the g job and want to drop out, that would be their decision and the change in jurisdiction need have nothing to do with it.

Or maybe you would rather have the Tehipite Chapter take it over? That's something that would be much better discussed over a bottle of blackberry brandy.