

P. O. Box 485
Kingsburg
California 93631

2 June 1971

Barbara Johnson
Box GG
Davis
California 95616

Subject: Forest Highway 100
Environmental Impact State-
ments

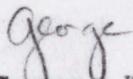
Dear Barbara,

I note with great interest your recent references to the fact that the Federal Highway Administration sent you copies of the Forest Highway 100 environmental impact statements only after the time for public input was past. This in spite of the fact that you had requested the statements from them many weeks prior.

I urge you to send copies of your letter requesting the statements, along with the FHA's letter of response, to John Hoffman. It appears to me that the FHA having so clearly denied you your requested opportunity to comment on the impact statements could very well have some legal significance.

I hope you will give John the opportunity to evaluate this possibility.

Sincerely,


George W. Whitmore

cc. John Hoffman



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TEHIPITE CHAPTER P. O. BOX 4102 FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93744
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P. O. Box 485
Kingsburg
California 93631

12 July 1971

Myra Mangan
Time-Life Books
Time-Life Building Room 1611B
Rockefeller Center
New York
N. Y. 10020

Dear Miss Mangan:

It was with extreme interest that I learned from Mrs. Martin Litton that Time-Life Books is preparing a series on "wilderness", and that one of this series will deal specifically with the Sierra Nevada. I expressed to Mrs. Litton great concern that you be made aware of an issue which poses an enormous threat to the integrity of the Sierra Nevada wilderness. She agreed with my concern, and this letter will outline that threat, as well as its possible resolution.

That portion of the Sierra Nevada crest lying on the headwaters of the San Joaquin River's North and Middle Forks was formerly within Yosemite National Park. In 1905 it was removed from the park in order to permit mining activity. Part of it was subsequently incorporated into what is now the Minarets Wilderness, but a significant portion still remains unprotected as general forest land within two different National Forests. (The mining proved to be a non-commercial proposition

South of this unprotected corridor lies the John Muir Wilderness and the Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks. To the north of the corridor lies the Minarets Wilderness and Yosemite National Park.

Essentially the only reason this corridor has been left in an unprotected status is because it has been proposed over the years as the location of another trans-Sierra highway. This is what is known as the Minaret Summit Highway proposal. The enthusiasm of the highway proponents seems to have waxed and waned over the years, depending on which politicians happened to be in office. The general public of course remains uninformed and indifferent. The conservationists, on the other hand, find the ranks of highway opponents steadily increasing.

A glance at the map will show you why opposition to this highway is steadily increasing. The Sierra Nevada in its natural state is, as you well know, a major national resource. It is the longest stretch of defacto wilderness left to us outside of Alaska, and the John Muir Trail which traverses its crest provides the hiker with a quality of experience which cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

To ram Interstate Highway 70 across this corridor would split into fragments John Muir's "Range of Light" and the incomparable trail which bears his name.

This is why I don't see how you can write a book about the Sierra Nevada wilderness without devoting considerable attention to the threat of its destruction, and what can be done to avert that destruction.

That which can be done is that which should have been done years ago--restore to it the statutory protection which Congress can give. The area was formerly part of Yosemite National Park. Subsequent changes in land classification make it impractical to restore the area to Yosemite, but it can be incorporated into the National Wilderness Preservation System. And that is precisely what many people are now attempting to do.

Congressman Jerome Waldie and twelve other California congressmen are sponsoring a bill (H.R. 4270) to incorporate this area into the Wilderness System, and it would be known as the San Joaquin Wilderness. To date, organizations which have gone on record in support of the San Joaquin Wilderness are the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, The Spokane Mountaineers, The Merced Fish and Game Club, and the National Rifle Association. (How's that for diversity!) Many other organizations have in the past gone on record in opposition to the highway, and we expect to enlist their formal support for the Wilderness proposal. The Sierra Club's conservation committee for the Northern California region identified the San Joaquin as being one of three areas which deserved priority attention for wilderness classification (out of twenty or thirty possible additions in Northern California), so you might very well consider the San Joaquin Wilderness to be fairly high on the Sierra Club's priority list. Michael Frome gave the San Joaquin Wilderness national publicity through his regular column in the April issue of Field and Stream.

I mention the above in order to show the widespread support for wilderness classification for the San Joaquin. Unfortunately, those who would desecrate the Sierra by splitting it asunder with a major highway (incorporation into the Interstate Highway System is their publicly acknowledged goal) make up for their lack of numbers by getting the support of key people. Congressman B.F. Sisk is the major proponent of the highway, even though the area it would cross is not even in his district any longer. Because he has the influence which sixteen years in Congress brings, other key congressmen are reluctant to cross him. The San Joaquin Wilderness bill has been referred to Mr. Aspinall's House Interior Committee--the graveyard of all wilderness bills! Even if the bill cleared the Interior Committee, Mr. Sisk could probably stop it because of his position on the Rules Committee. I mention this opposition to show how formidable it is, even though it consists of only two or three congressmen. We are in this battle for the long pull!

In the meantime, the Bureau of Public Roads grinds inexorably onward, pushing the pavement closer and closer toward the core of the Sierra Nevada from both east and west. Their project is known as Forest Highway 100, and it would be the "pilot road" which would precede Interstate 70.

So, the fight that is shaping up is The People of the United States of America vs. A Handful of Congressmen. (Sounds familiar, doesn't it?) The stakes are John Muir's Range of Light and the trail which bears his name--and these just happen to be the subject of a book you are writing!

Now we aren't asking you to take sides, although we certainly wouldn't object if you did. What we are suggesting is that the high publishing standards you have set for yourselves cannot be maintained by ignoring controversy, or by passing lightly over it. The reader cannot gain a true understanding and appreciation of the Sierra Nevada unless he considers its future, as well as its present and past. And judging by your previous publications, I have reason to believe that you are truly seeking to enlighten your readers.

A simple exposition of the facts would be sufficient, because the facts speak for themselves. The arguments being made for the highway are incredibly weak, while at the same time there are compelling reasons for giving the area a wilderness classification. We ask only that the public be made aware of the issues involved, and that they be given sufficient information that they can write their congressmen if they are so moved.

Since I will be in Canada from now until September, I am asking Anthony Chasteen (12505 Geysers Road, Cloverdale, California 95425) to send you further information. Mr. Chasteen has been working independently on this project for more than two years, and has developed a very extensive set of files on it. He knows the San Joaquin Wilderness personally, and has access to a set of 100-200 color slides (35 mm.) Most of the slides are mine, some are quite good, and I would be happy to offer the use of them at no charge. I trust you will be hearing from Mr. Chasteen shortly.

Perhaps others have approached you, each seeking to have the spotlight of publicity thrown on what he considers to be the major threat to the Sierra Nevada. I certainly would not attempt to belittle these other threats--they are numerous, they are serious, and some of them are enormous in their implications (Mineral King, for example).

But the Minaret Summit Highway threat is unique in that it alone would destroy the integrity of the Sierra Nevada in one blow, splitting asunder the "Gentle Wilderness", breaking into fragments the longest stretch of wilderness left to us outside of Alaska, and demolishing even the very concept upon which the John Muir Trail was founded.

The other threats, great as they are, would not do these things. For this reason, it is imperative that you give the highest consideration to the Minaret Summit Highway problem and to its alternative--the San Joaquin Wilderness!

Thank you for helping to preserve the integrity of this incomparable national resource.

Sincerely,

George W. Whitmore

George W. Whitmore
Conservation Chairman



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TEHIPITE CHAPTER P. O. BOX 4102 FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93744
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P. O. Box 485
Kingsburg
California 93631

14 July 1971

Ed Royce, Chairman
Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs Resolutions Committee
842 S. Livermore Avenue
Livermore
California 94550

Dear Ed,

I am writing you in two capacities--one as a representative of the Sierra Club and the other as an individual member of the FWOC.

We would like the FWOC to adopt a resolution in support of the San Joaquin Wilderness proposal.

Fortunately you are already familiar with the proposal, so this letter can be brief. I am enclosing several copies of Barbara Johnson's brochure, and a letter which she sent to Doug Scott of The Wilderness Society; both of these documents give quite a bit of background information.

Of course you are aware of the high priority given the San Joaquin Wilderness by the Sierra Club's NCRCC, and the fact the the Club's Board of Directors formally endorsed the proposal. In addition, the proposal is being supported by The Wilderness Society, The Spokane Mountaineers (copy of their endorsement enclosed), the Merced Fish and Game Club, and the National Rifle Association.

As you can see, we are seeking diversity in the endorsements, and that is a very big reason why we would like the FWOC in particular to add their name to the list.

As to form of endorsement, I don't like to see references to bill numbers or acreages as these constitute an automatic expiration date being assigned to the endorsement. I feel is is much preferable to endorse a proposal in principle, as this leaves the way open for improvements in the proposal and continues the endorsement in effect from one session of Congress to the next. I would suggest

"The FWOC endorses the efforts of conservationists to establish a San Joaquin Wilderness on the North and Middle Forks of the San Joaquin River in the central Sierra Nevada of California, thus preserving the integrity of the John Muir Trail and the surrounding region."

I decided the last phrase should be added in order to let people who would see the resolution know what the problem is.

--- To explore, enjoy, and protect the natural mountain scene ---

Thank you. Sincerely, *George* George W. Whitmore, Conservation Chairman



SIERRA CLUB

TEHIPITE CHAPTER P. O. BOX 4102 FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93744
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16 July 1971

Honorable Richard T. Hanna
House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Subject: San Joaquin Wilderness
(H.R. 6857)

Sir:

We have long been grateful for your support of Mr. Waldie's efforts to save the proposed San Joaquin Wilderness, both in the previous Congress (H.R. 15019) and in the present one (H.R. 4270).

We are also pleased that you feel so strongly on this matter that you have introduced a bill of your own, H.R. 6857.

We note, however, that H.R. 6857 contains an error which appeared in Mr. Waldie's bill last year, but which he has corrected in his present bill. The boundaries originally called for, as delineated on the map which accompanied H.R. 15019 last year, encompassed an area of approximately 48,000 acres. But due to either clerical or typographical error somewhere along the line, the area specified in H.R. 15019 was "43,000" acres; this was never a correct figure

In the interim, following more thorough on-the-ground surveys, we concluded that the proposed boundaries could be considerably improved by the addition of 2,500 acres at the southwest corner of the area. Mr. Waldie agreed to this change, and consequently his new bill (H.R. 4270) calls for a total of 50,500 acres. (The original 48,000 plus the new 2,500.)

We would greatly appreciate it if you would amend your bill to make it consistent with the one Mr. Waldie has already introduced. This would eliminate a potential for much confusion, and would enable conservationists to rally behind a single concept.

You would not be offending anyone by doing this, as we were the ones who made the original proposal, and we are also the ones who subsequently requested that its boundary be improved by taking in the additional acreage.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

George W. Whitmore

George W. Whitmore
Conservation Chairman