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Diamond L Ranch
“Restoring Public Access to the Public Lands: Issues Impacting Multiple-use on Our
National Forests”
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In 1847 my family settled in Lincoln, and began our ranching history in CA. Migrating from the valley, they learned the valuable asset of the Sierra Nevada Mountains for grazing during summers.

In 1931 my father and his brothers leased nine thousand acres from Hobart Lumber Company in Sierra County where we are permittees today. They built cabins, developed springs, and made a long commitment to the land.

The U.S. Forest Service took ownership of this land during the 1950's. Our allotment was named the Independence, and a respectful working relationship began between a ranching family and the federal government.

My wife and I began grazing the Independence in 1976. Over the past decades we have worked closely with Forest Service personnel, maintained healthy forest grounds and meadows, and dealt with challenges.

During the 1980's, radical environmentalists began shooting our livestock. We informed the Forest Service, government representatives and the California Attorney General. The FBI was contacted, and the activity ended in 1991.

Endangered species have also been a threat to our permit to graze the Independence. Our cows have been accused of frightening fish, threatening bird nests, and destroying aspen groves. Yet over the past eighty years, species such as Lahotan Cutthroat Trout and aspen have thrived on the Independence. In fact it has been admired as a showcase.

The Independence is a healthy, flourishing piece of the Tahoe National Forest, a prime example of good use by citizens of their own land to raise food and fiber for our population. This land is not owned by the government, it is owned by United States citizens. The government has been formed to supervise its use in a functional, reasonable manner.

Recently it appears that that supervision has become both dysfunctional and unreasonable.

In 2009, new appointments were made to the Tahoe, and new attitudes and action arose. After decades of no complaints, we were suddenly in serious violation. In

May of 2010, we were served notice of non compliance. The alleged violations had supposedly taken place eight months prior during the fall of 2009. We had received no warnings over the winter months.

In the Notice of Non Compliance, we were accused of allegedly violating federal law in three areas:

1. Allowing cattle to graze off of our allotment onto the Independence Lake private ground
2. Allowing cattle to graze off allotment onto UC Berkeley Experimental Forest
3. Exceeding Forest Service grazing standards with regard to aspen utilization.

At that time we were informed that any further incident would be considered willful and grounds for cancellation of our permit. We were also told that dismantling of our cabins was being considered.

We asked why we had been given no warning. We were told that rules had changed and warnings were no longer necessary. We asked what influence recent change of ownership of Independence Lake to the Nature Conservancy had had on this decision. We were told new pressures were developing. We asked for reconsideration. We were denied.

We drafted a letter to our forest supervisor asking that the non compliance be vacated. A meeting was arranged. At that meeting we acknowledged our cattle had drifted onto private ground, but that is was not intentional, there had been no complaints from the owner and the cattle had been brought back onto boundaries in a timely manner. We described how our cattle had been apparently driven seven miles off allotment onto UC Berkeley property. We reminded our supervisor that those cattle also had been brought back onto allotment boundaries in less than twenty four hours. Federal law states we have seventy two hours in order to retrieve cattle, and we were well under that time limit in both cases.

Concerned with the supposed violation of aspen damage, we investigated our meadows. It was apparent that human cutting of young trees had been taking place. We took photographs. When presented with pictures, the violation of aspen utilization was dropped, but our ranger would not vacate the other non compliance charges.

At that meeting when we described how our cattle had most likely been driven onto UC Berkeley ground, we were called conspiracy theorists. When we asked why we were in non compliance while being within legal time constraints, we were again told

new pressures were rising. When we asked why our cabins were being threatened with destruction, we were told we were no longer authorized to use them.

Congressmen, first of all we know when our cattle have been driven; we do not imagine such things. In fact during 2010, neighbors witnessed unknown riders driving our cattle off allotment. Law enforcement was contacted. Secondly, new ownership of private land should not entitle Forest Service to arbitrarily change rules to hurt or threaten us. And finally, our cabins have been ours for eighty years. We have paid property taxes on these cabins for decades, and we do not appreciate being told by our government that we are not authorized to use what we have built and owned for so long.

Overwhelming evidence shows we have been good stewards of the land for eighty years. Now our own government in the form of the US Forest Service – complying with an extreme environmental agenda - threatens to force grazing off the public's land and end our way of life.

Congressman McClintock, we wish to thank you deeply for your support in this chain of events. We have felt helpless against an agency of our government and we ask for your continued support.

Thank you.