

# Committee on Resources

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STATEMENT OF  
RAQUEL JONES  
PRIVATE CITIZEN  
COMMUNITY OF LYTLE CREEK, CALIFORNIA  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ON THE FOREST SERVICE RECREATION FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM  
WASHINGTON DC  
SEPTEMBER 17, 2003

Mr. Chairman:

It's an honor and a privilege for me to be invited to be part of this hearing to discuss the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. I represent the small community of Lytle Creek, California, which is located inside the boundary of the San Bernardino National Forest.

My husband and I moved to Lytle Creek in December of 1996. We bought an old rock house which is a historic landmark. We fell in love with the surroundings – the beautiful green mountains, the stream, the birds singing in the trees, the wind blowing, the beautiful flowers, and the quiet place.

But when summer came it was very different. People came from the city to get away from the heat. They were everywhere. The creek was trashed and there was garbage all over. The trees were carved with names. There were weeds all over and pieces of glass and metal left from a car crash. The first impression was nothing but garbage. I came home frustrated, thinking what could I do to communicate to the public to take care of the area.

In June of 1998 I read an article in the newspaper about community cleanup and I started contacting people to see if I could get help. The County Supervisors' Office provided me with 2 dumpsters. I put a flyer in the local newspaper to let everyone in the community know where to put their trash. But it wasn't enough. The dumpsters were full to the top in less than half an hour.

After that I decided to become an Adventure Pass vendor because my house was right on the road and I would be able to be in direct contact with the public. Most of the people that come to the canyon are Spanish speaking people and I am able to communicate with them because Spanish is my first language. I put up a bulletin board with beautiful wildlife photos and signs in Spanish telling them not to litter and destroy the forest. Over the years I have made a great impact on educating the public because I speak the language. I target the kids because they are the future. I tell them that Lytle Creek will still be here for you when you come back with your children if you take care of it. I educate the kids by handing out cartoon papers with pictures they can relate to and handing out trash bags.

The people have told me that Lytle Creek looks cleaner because everyone is cleaning up after themselves. When they buy their Adventure Pass from me they ask me for their Trash Bag. The Rangers go by and pick up the trash bags and they are already full. The people are for the Adventure Pass. The people have been asking if there will be more improvements such as picnic tables, ramps for the handicapped, parking

spaces, bicycle trails, water, better and cleaner restrooms. We want to keep the Adventure Pass long enough to be able to get some of these improvements.

Lytle Creek is not the only community that is in the same condition. I have spoken with Tom McIntosh who lives in Forest Falls. He is a realtor who would not show his clients the National Forest in his community before the Adventure Pass because it was so full of trash and graffiti. Now he will tell you it is the first place he takes his clients because he is so proud of its beauty.

I have also spoken with Dee Hansen, who lives inside the Angeles Forest at Mt. Baldy Village. Dee is 82 years old and bought her own sandblaster to remove graffiti. She and her husband put 55 gallon drums out in her community to collect the trash and emptied the cans every week. She finally put her house up for sale because the community was becoming so undesirable. Then, like me, she became an Adventure Pass vendor. She gives people trash bags and talks to them about the Forest. There are more patrols in the forest now, the area is clean, and the gang bangers are gone. The community and the visitors are very happy with the Adventure Pass Program and Dee has taken down the "For Sale" sign.

#### Summary

I want the land to be a benefit for all people – for the people from the community, for the visitors, and for the children. Thousands of people come to Lytle Creek and there is only one small picnic area. People bring their own tables and their own grills because the picnic area is full and they want to come to enjoy the creek. They need restrooms and they want them cleaned. They need a place to put their trash so that it doesn't end up in the creek. We have been able to do these things because of the Adventure Pass. If the Adventure Pass goes away, Lytle Creek will be the same as it was before and soon there won't be a place for them to recreate because everything will be destroyed.

I have big dreams. I want Lytle Creek to be beautiful. I want my daughters to be proud to say they live in Lytle Creek. If it wasn't for the support my husband and my daughters give me, I wouldn't be able to do what I am doing for my community.