



January 16, 2014

1050 Nevada Street, #109
Reno, NV 89503

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
Forest Supervisor
35 College Drive
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

Re: Corrected letter for Tom Tidwell, Objection Reviewing Officer

Dear Sir,

Enclosed is my Letter of Objection to the decision to select a plan (alternative E) which does not include new wilderness designations for the Revised Lake Tahoe Basin Management Plan.

This is to replace the letter I mailed to you yesterday, January 15, 2014. This letter includes typographical corrections and additional comments. A hand injury affected my typing ability in the previous letter I sent to you, and in the letter I emailed to Tom Tidwell on January 5th. A Forest Service secretary advised me to submit my letter to your office, in order for Mr. Tidwell to receive it within the time period.

Sincerely,

Stephen Alastuey

January 16, 2015

1050 Nevada Street, #109
Reno, Nevada 89503

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Tom Tidwell, Objection Reviewing Officer
c/o Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
35 College Drive
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

Dear Mr. Tidwell,

This is to record my Notice of Objection to your decision to select a plan (alternative E) which does not include new wilderness designations.

On January 5, 2014 I submitted, via email, a copy of this letter to your Regional Office, R5, 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592. By telephone on January 6th, a Forest Service secretary said to receive my letter by January 21, I should resubmit it to the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. Typographical errors in my previous letter were due to a hand injury. Additional comments are included here.

Due to injuries, I was not able to join the Tahoe Area Sierra Club in wilderness study hikes to the Meiss Country (Dardanelles), Granite Chief, Trimmer Peak, Hell Hole, and Desolation Wilderness Area. I therefore refer to my residence, experiences, and observations in South Lake Tahoe and the surrounding mountains and riparian areas, and occasional visits around Lake Tahoe. I lived in South Lake Tahoe and attended school there from 1961 to 1970, visited intermittently between 1970 and 1973, and lived there from 1973 to 1978. I witnessed significant changes in environment and social conditions.

From 1961 to 1966, South Tahoe had two busy seasons, summer beach season and winter ski season. Between these seasons was a lull of reduced traffic, resembling a small town or rural atmosphere. The Tahoe Keys development was in its early stage, and had not yet reached its present situation. Tahoe keys eventually filled approximately 78% of the marshlands that originally reached from Al Tahoe to Pope Beach. This marshland, including the Upper Truckee River, Trout Creek, Taylor Creek, and tributaries in the watershed, was the major sediment filtering agent for Lake Tahoe. Lake Tahoe's subsequent decline in clarity, from 100 feet in 1960 to 70 feet today, is largely due to landfill for the Tahoe Keys development.

In the last 22 years or so, very effective riparian restoration has occurred in the remaining marshland estuary of the Upper Truckee River and Trout Creek.

In 1961-1962, the prominent sporting goods outlet and tourist shop at South Tahoe, the Outdoorsman, sold its one microscope, and didn't plan to get another one. Being deprived of a microscope for natural science study, I reverted to the next available outdoor activity, fishing (always popular), hunting, and trapping fur-bearing animals. The outdoors around South Tahoe,

before population increase and haphazard development changed the landscape and social conditions suffered, were open, accessible, largely undeveloped, and provided significant wildlife habitat.

I am descended from European agriculturists, and was familiar with firearms and traps used in wildlife harvest and control. Abundant wildlife habitat around South Tahoe was an open book and an outlet for enthusiasm. By 1967 a sense of conservation outweighed my inclination for so-called sport hunting. Declining wildlife population, and an increasing perspective and insight for the character and habits of wildlife species, enhanced my sense of values for habitat conservation.

At that time, the commercial definition of recreation was mostly concerned with the promotion of equipment and vehicles for the exploitation of wildlife and landscape. Conservation values were seldom mentioned. Consequently, the landscape was overrun by off-road-vehicles, natural habitat was reduced, wild plant and animal species declined, and human recreation opportunities were degraded. As these deficiencies occurred, substance abuse increased, and in some areas became epidemic.

Sensible companions in those times were few. The family of my usual outdoor companion and school mate were formerly loggers at Lake Tahoe, and operated heavy equipment. Our mothers attended the same grade school and art classes in Reno. The most knowledgeable outdoorsman I was acquainted with was Bill Tisher, a sporting goods salesman at The Outdoorsman. Bill previously worked for the Forest Service. He wrote a newspaper outdoor column. His USFS duties included dropping pesticides out of airplanes for insect control in woodlands. He said they didn't know the damage they were doing when they dumped DDT (and other chemicals he may have mentioned) into the food chain.

Hunting and trapping, as commonly, commercially, and often unscrupulously practiced, were not usually conducive to sustainable natural resource conservation. In 1967, when I was bowhunting for deer on a dirt road between Trout Creek and the Meyers waste disposal facility, a car driven by an Outdoorsman employee (and descendant of a pioneer Tahoe steamboat captain), Stan Pomin, approached. Stan and his young son were having an afternoon drive. In the nearby forest cover, the guns of deer hunters were continually banging, keeping the deer frightened and on the move.

Mr. Pomin stopped, opened his car window to me, and expressed displeasure at those reckless shooters. He then drove on, frustrated as he evidently intended to share an enjoyable afternoon in the outdoors with his son. Hunting season was profitable for the Outdoorsman, it provided a type of release for hunters, but it was a dangerous time in the woods.

In 1967, Colin Fletcher's book "Thousand Mile Summer" reduced my apprehensions that our society encourages the decimation of wildlife and destruction of natural resources. Mr. Fletcher focussed on essential, sustainable, non-impactive participation and enjoyment of the environment. His description of the Desolation Valley Wilderness Area inspired my first backpacking hike alone through the Wilderness Area. My photographs of that hike were misplaced and lost. One photo, taken from the mountainside above China Flat meadow, showed its pristine condition, with the clear, deep blue ribbon of the Rubicon River winding through it.

Seven years later, when I backpacked upstream along the Rubicon River, China Flat was fenced in for cattle grazing. The previously 10 or 12 foot deep, clear river was silted in to a few inches in depth, cloudy with cow droppings and muddy with their hoof prints. The formerly dense natural grasses were grazed nearly to the ground. Cow trails criss-crossed the depleted meadow. Willows along the stream were gnawed down and spindly.

As development increased around Lake Tahoe, my familiar hiking and restorative areas, including historical sites (a collapsed dugout cabin near the Upper Truckee River meadow upstream from Highway 50, and a decaying wooden sluice canal on a steep hillside along Cold Creek, upstream from the Montgomery Estates development and Frank Globin's old city water supply ponds) were desecrated by off road vehicles, litter, and ecological misuse. To get away from the mayhem, I reverted to fur trapping two or three times. It was increasingly unsatisfactory, as encroachment was reducing trapping areas, wildlife was becoming scarce, and my need for conservation was increasing.

The gate on the High Meadows Road, above Montgomery Estates, was where our former Boy Scout troop started backpacking to spend five days at High Meadows. In 1974, a group of unwholesome, threatening looking people, with the the common appellation of "hippies," camped at the gate. They said they were gate guards for Harvey Gross, owner of Harvey's Wagon Wheel Hotel-Casino. Harvey's ran cattle above the gate to High Meadows in the summer. They looked more like vandals and sociopaths than cattle gate guards. Their demoralizing influence affected social conditions and environment. They were a stereotype for many people in the community in those years.

The gate on High Meadows Road is now an established trail head for the hiking trail to High Meadows and Star Lake. It's a considerable improvement over the intimidating "cattle gate guards" in 1974.

Humans are social animals. It is our responsibility to encourage healthy, sustainable interactions, not unhealthy, destructive behavior.

In the 1960's I occasionally hiked around Luther Pass and Grass Lake, and fished in Willow Creek, near the Dardanelles Lake tributary to the Upper Truckee River. My latest visit to Dardanelles Lake was in August 1990, on a group hike with the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Reno. Our hiking leader was retired Nevada State Senator, Jean Ford.

One of the hikers to Dardanelles Lake was the niece of the owner of a great restaurant in the 1960's. The restaurant, Poor Pierre's, was comfortable with wooden slab floors, sawdust on the floors (easier to sweep sawdust for cleaning), antiques and artwork on the walls, with a rustic atmosphere. Food portions were ample and flavorful. The owner's name was Archie. When Archie retired, the new owner changed the name to Hoss Hog's and removed the comfortable accouterments. I considered the name to be a defamation of the facility and community. Several years ago the caustic name was changed to a more pleasant title. I haven't been inside the new restaurant.

In 1987 I made a report to a police narcotics agency in Reno. About a year later, the mayor of South Lake Tahoe and his group were arrested for drug dealing and money laundering. After that, environmental protection greatly improved around Lake Tahoe. Tons of litter were cleaned from beaches, streets, forest, meadows, and riparian areas. Motorcycle gangs stopped roaming

roads and beaches on the 4th of July. Pedestrian and bike trails were built around town; some are fenced with attractive split rail fences (some of them were falling into disrepair two summers ago). Undeveloped city lots were bought for USFS protection. Attractive boulder and vegetation landscaping protects roadway hillsides from erosion.

Critical habitat areas are fenced and protected for endangered and unique plant and wildlife ecosystems. Some species may yet be on the rebound. The formerly dense June Bug population has not recovered, and mountain quail numbers are low.

Organized bicycle races and triathlons are held around the lake. A public park and athletic facility was built on Al Tahoe Boulevard. Lake Tahoe Community College was built across the road from the park. The college is an essential asset. The Forest Service office moved to the newer building near the college. The proximity of these three facilities indicates a positive level of foresight in planning.

Tahoe Meadows, a former sheepherding area for flocks that were herded up Mt. Rose from Reno, is protected. The Meadows is divided into separate areas for non-motorized and motorized recreation.

In 1974, while walking on Highway 50 in South Tahoe to the El Dorado County Library on Kingsbury Grade, I observed what appeared to be a family in a large RV. The driver appeared to be a father with his family on vacation. His expression indicated extreme displeasure; he gesticulated in a negative manner. I suspect he was expressing regret at his family's disappointment, and for the expenditure, for taking them on a vacation to South Tahoe, when he could have chosen a more accommodating area.

Since the early 1990's, extensive efforts have been made to restore indigenous Lahontan Cutthroat Trout populations throughout the Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake watersheds. The LTC restocking program aims to establish populations as close as possible to the original genetic stock in their historic waterways. The restocking program is productive and successful. Riparian restoration and LTC restocking is also successful where cooperative partnerships are formed between livestock ranchers and fishery biologists.

Additional wilderness designation would be very beneficial to the quality of life, health of the environment, and the economy at Lake Tahoe.

Sincerely,


Stephen Alastuey