

To: Karen Taylor-Goodrich, Superintendent
Subject: Wilderness Stewardship Plan
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
Dear Ms Taylor-Goodrich,

We have hiked and backpacked the Sierra Nevada for over 50 years. The Sierras are an important part of our, and our son's life. Last year we brought our 18 month old granddaughter to Tuolumne Meadows. We will be there again next month.

I have written many letters about the use stock animals by wilderness visitors. I believe that if they are physically able to heft a pack, they should do so. I would limit use of stock animals to the handicapped.

We have seen the destruction of meadowland by recreationally used stock animals. Furrows cut two feet deep where the foot path should have been. Along one of the trails, a Ranger checked out wilderness permit, and we asked when the meadow would be repaired. "Years from now, given the backlog of work, and lack of funds." On another trip, we crossed Donahue Pass from Thousand Island Lake just ahead of a pack train of about a dozen animals. They were moving faster than us, so we let them pass. The whole rest of the downhill track we had the stink of manure and urine in our noses and the annoyance of flies. We camped about a half mile past their campsite. The pack animals, some with bells were roaming free, foraging along the Lyell Fork banks and drinking from the creek. And who knows what all. Chaise lounges for the clients and the delicious fragrance of grilling steaks. With background music from boom boxes. Hardly a wilderness experience.

When we plan a wilderness trip we have to comply with trailhead quotas. Not so the stock animal groups. We are low impact hikers. The stock animal groups are not. And they don't pay their fair share of trail maintenance cost.

The following are my recommendations for items that should be included in the new Stewardship Plan.

Commercial Stock Outfits should pay fees commensurate with the damage to the trails, vegetation (meadow and riparian) that they damage.

Hikers and outfitters should be treated equally when issuing trailhead permits. The number of stock animals should be reduced significantly.

Stock animals should stay on trails. No cross country travel.

In the long term, phase out pack animals, except for the truly handicapped. If the number of handicapped clients is too small to warrant a commercial enterprise, then the US Government should provide a handicapped person service. Possibly under the Aid to Disabled Persons legislation.

Thank You.
Respectfully,
Frank A. Junga

