

October 27, 2011

MEISS  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
EL DORADO COUNTY

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El Dorado County Board of Supervisors  
Honorable Ray Nutting, Chair  
330 Fair Lane  
Placerville, Ca. 95667

COPY SENT TO BOARD MEMBERS  
FOR THEIR INFORMATION

DATE 11-3-11

*file*

Dear Chairman Nutting:

I would like to follow up with a few comments regarding the Upper Truckee Wild and Scenic River designation. Someone had asked how the public got started in Meiss area.

I can shed some light on that subject. In the 1960 and 1970's the popular place to hike and camp was Desolation. That was also the time of the "Hippie" generation and they almost took over Desolation for their own country. I remember riding into Desolation from the ranch in the early 1960's and heard say, "there was one under every rock." The Forest Service hired a packer, Jim Hawksworth. Jim with his 3 mules would spend time in Desolation every week with the sole purpose of picking up and packing out garbage.

Somewhere in the 1970's time frame the designation of Wilderness was give to the Desolation area. In the 1980's, with the demand of hiking and camping, the Forest Service needed another area to direct people to and that was Meiss country. Now comes the influx of hikers, bikers and riders. The Big Meadow trailhead on Hwy 89, was built in the mid 1990's and I am told the Meiss trailhead on Hwy 88, Carson Pass was built about the same time. . Remember, this was all cow county at the time.

I think it was around 1990 or 1991, when I attended a meeting at the Lake Tahoe Community College regarding the removal of cows from Big meadow, Round Lake and Meiss country. None other than the Sierra Club was the promoter of this movement. I asked WHY?? and was told, they did not like stepping in the cow pies and listening to the cow bells. This was my introduction to the bulldozer effect of this organization.

In a few short years, around 1994, I became involved with TRPA and the League to Save L.T. and their efforts to remove all cows from the basin and mountain grazing and this also included horses. The League was representing the Sierra Club at the time. For the next 3 years I spent frightening the system of TRPA and in Feb. 1997 lost the battle to graze a horse at the ranch without obtaining a grazing permit from TRPA. Fortunately, Soil Conversation, now called NRCS came to the rescue with all I needed for the permit. Each year NRCS would visit the ranch and observe the pastures conditions and to make sure the livestock did not have access to the Upper Truckee River..

Also, many people who had horses in the basin made the move to Carson Valley as a result of this ruling.. The cattle rancher who had the allotment in Meiss Meadow at the time, sued TRPA twice and lost both time. Did all of this improve the clarity of Lake Tahoe?, don't think it made much difference, if any.

The last year any cattle were grazed in Meiss country was about 1998 and since then the country has become over grown with lodge pole pine on the dryer portions of the area, with willows and the corn flower plant in the meadows. The Forest Service "can not" begin to control the growth of any of these elements.

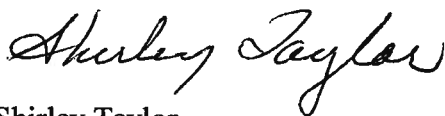
In early 2000 I became friends with the LTBMU Forest Supervisor, Maribeth Gustafson. She was a supervisor who like to get out and see the country she managed. What a great lady and we are still very good friends.

She thought it would be a great idea if I started to ride for the Forest Service and check the country for garbage, review locations of fire pits, assist the hikers and riders to answer questions and review trail conditions and make suggestions. I did three trips in 2003 and realized it was worth my time to do this work. Since 2004, the year I moved to Woodfords, I have continued with the Volunteer Ranger program for the LTBMU.

To give you an idea of the people impact on this high country, on a Saturday in July 2007, I made a trip to Meiss Meadow from the Big Meadow trailhead on Hwy 89 and counted 157 people and I know I did not count everyone. I told my boss I would be riding on week days only, from then on. On an average, weekly ride, I count 50-60 people between Meiss trailhead and Showers Lake before Labor day and after, 30-40 until the weather gets cooler and shorter days. As long as the weather stays nice, people continue to visit this area.. I also encounter groups of up to 25, usually scout troupes from the Sacramento Valley who stay at Showers Lake for 2-3 days and that is an impact on the area.

I wonder, how many people will come to see the Upper Truckee River just because of the "Wild and Scenic Designation". At the end of the day, I think, it is all about the money.

Yours truly,



Shirley Taylor  
422 Chambers Lane  
Woodfords, Ca. 96120