

San Carlos Ranger District
Attn: Destiny Chapman
3028 East Main Street
Canon City, CO 81212

7-20-2023

Ms Destiny Chapman,

I'm writing regarding the proposed land exchange with the Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp. My husband Stephen and I own the ranch directly north of the proposed exchange. The land use is historic, not only because of a group of Russian Jews who settled there in the early 1880s, but the ranch has been owned and used by my family since 1948.

For years we leased a water line from the Forest Service to Lake Creek to water our cattle. When cost of the lease kept rising, it became prohibitive to continue and we opted to install a solar pump and tank for watering our cows in the upper pastures. The access to the solar pump and tank is through a gate along the fence next to the proposed trade. A two-lane track connects our property with the parking lot along Road 198. We have used this road to bring in equipment for building and maintaining the solar pump, to check our cattle in our upper pasture, to reach our headgate/water right at Balman Reservoir, and for accessing the site of the historic Jewish Colony, just north of our fence.

State archaeologists have combed through the colony site for artifacts, and more recently, a film crew visited the Jewish Colony site to create footage for the film, "Jews of the Wild West." In 2010 another documentary was made by the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society as part of an anniversary celebration of the colony. Road access to the colony site is important in preserving the history of the area as well as for providing entry to our upper ranch country.

When we first heard about the proposed trade, Paul Crespino, the previous Forest Service director, gave us a verbal commitment that we would still be able to use the existing road to gain entry to the upper part of our ranch. Because of the rugged terrain, we have limited access to this part of our ranch. To complicate this issue, our ranch was placed in a conservation easement, and we cannot create new roads or make improvements beyond what has already been designated by our CE contract.

In essence, without a right of entry, the proposed Locke Park Land Exchange would minimize access to our upper acreage, threaten our livelihood and deny us, for all practical purposes, the full use of our ranch. We're asking for a solution to this problem before the exchange goes forward.

Thank you for your help.

Nancy and Steve Oswald