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First name: Tim

Last name: Graf

Organization: Blue Mountain Ranch Summer Camp

Title: Director

Comments: To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Tim Graf, and for the last 77 years my family has operated a children's summer camp just outside of Florissant, summer 2024 will be 78 years. We have lots of activities for our campers to choose from, but some of our two most popular are horseback riding and hiking both of which utilize Pike National Forest, which surrounds our camp on three sides. We hold an outfitter license through the National Forest Service to utilize the forest. Unfortunately, due to the amount of recreational shooting in the forest around us, we have been losing more and more days in the forest each year.

We are in an area deemed as wildland urban interface. This means we are in an area where the Nation Forest or "wildlands" meets private lands and residences or human developments. This should say enough about recreational shooting in this area, but I know that is not the case. I have seen or found evidence that all 8 of the National Forest Services regulations for recreational shooting have been violated in forest out our back gate. Almost every forest service road sign, even off the county roads, have at least one bullet hole in them, I have found beer cans riddled with bullet holes, broken glass, we have witnessed a child shooting a camping chair with AR 15 and have seen signs of shooting standing trees.

We noticed an increase of forest usage after a forest mitigation project was completed in 2010. During this project the main roads, jeep roads, were made so 18-wheelers could drive on them. There were also new roads for the project that open more forest access. While we appreciate the forest mitigation because we all know how important it is, in this case it brought an influx of recreational shooting to our back gate. While working with the Forest Service most of the new access roads have been closed and some of the jeep roads are back to being jeep/4X4 roads.

Let me start with the Springer Fire in the summer of 2012. This was started by people recreational shooting. Witnesses reported hearing repeated gunfire and then a loud explosion. (The Gazette, June 21, 2012) While the fire did not reach my property, we were evacuated from our summer camp. This meant we had to get 52 campers out, roughly 20 staff including nurses, kitchen help and volunteers and 18 horses. We were displaced for three days. The fire was just far enough away that our insurance would not cover any business losses due to being evacuated. This could have been prevented.

In 2019 less than 100 yards from our fence line, 5 men got out of a vehicle and fired high powered rifles and emptied their clips into a riparian area; a riparian zone, or areas, are lands that occur along the edges of rivers, streams, lakes, and other water bodies and are considered by the Forest Service as a place where shooting is not allowed. This was done within eyesight of campers and staff as the boys were in their cabins for rest time. The shooters were about 75-80 yards from my horse barn which is surrounded by trees and not visible from the forest at this time. At the time of the shooting, our horses were in the barn. While the shots fired scared the whole herd, two went through a fence and were severely injured. One cut an artery in her face that our camp nurse held shut for about 30 minutes while we waited for our vet to show up. The vet said our nurse saved that horse's life. The 2nd horse needed multiple stitches on her legs and body. Both horses were unable to be used the rest of the summer, and we even had to board them for the winter while they recovered from their injuries. After this incident, I was put in touch with Nick Walters who was able to have a couple of no shooting signs installed in the area where this took place and near our barn. All of which have since been vandalized at this point. This could have been prevented.

In conclusion, I am for the Integrated Management of Target Shooting Project. The Springer Fire and the incident

in 2019 prove that recreation target shooting in this wildland urban interface are in danger to the people who call it home and those who recreate here. I fear, if nothing is done, it is only a matter of time before the unthinkable happens.

Sincerely,
Tim Graf
Director
Blue Mountain Ranch Summer Camp

References: The Gazette, https://gazette.com/news/fire-update-springer-fire-57-percent-contained/article_2f246d5d-a0d9-5573-add6-643141e44585.html