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First name: Christian

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing to support the requests of Montlure Camp and to ask the Forest Service to clear the way.

Montlure Camp has impacted countless lives for nearly 100 years. It has blessed lives of generations of people, affording them a safe and hospitable place to encounter nature by spending time amongst the flora and fauna along the East Fork of the Little Colorado River. For many this was their first exposure to such an environment because most of their lives have been in more urban environments. I saw this impact last summer when I was a speaker at a week long camp. At night we would gather and I would point out stars and talked of the moon. We also did things like hiked over to the west fork of the Little Colorado River. Montlure offers these youth the opportunity to unplug and reflect on who they are and their lives, as well as dream about a future. For many of the kids the time in the forest awakens a desire to keep exploring as well as a sense of the responsibility of caring for nature so that it is there for future generations.

In my interactions with the Montlure leadership, including the time I spent volunteering in the spring of 2024 to help get the property ready for campers during the summer, I sensed a strong desire to collaborate with the Forest Service and to abide with the limits and restrictions. I saw how at great expense they paid for and constructed a fence to help protect endangered wildlife. I have every confidence that the camp leadership would bring this same dedication and mindfulness to future efforts to restore and improve the camp property. If I felt that they did not care for the environment they are operating in, then I would have nothing to do with them. However, I have no worries about their sense of Creation Care.

To say 'no' to the request of Montlure would be to ask them to operate with their arm tied behind their back. The fire more than a decade ago was devastating. The facility was damaged and aged so as to now it is in need of restoration and updating. Without these things it would be exceptionally hard to operate the facility. It would diminish the experience of the at-risk youth and instead of a positive experience in the forest it would be the opposite and would not ignite a passion for nature. In my estimation their requests are not extravagant. They are trying to bring the facility up to viability.

Lastly, may I be so bold as to suggest that not only would the Forest Service approve Montlure's request, but that the Forest Service find ways to help facilitate these renewal requests. Perhaps a grant or the like would be an investment not merely in a facility, it would be an investment in future of at-risk youth. It would be an opportunity to enable second 100 years of impacting in lives and igniting a love of the wilderness.

Thank you!

(Please see attached photos I took of at-risk youth experiencing nature via Montlure Camp)

Attachments:

IMG_0421.jpeg

IMG_0426.jpeg

IMG_0713.jpeg

IMG_0689.jpeg