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Organization: Blue Mountain Ranch Summer Camp for Kids

Title: Director

Comments: To Whom it May Concern:

My family has owned and operated a small summer camp just outside of Florissant, in the South Park Ranger District, for the last 75 years. Over those years we have come to notice to increase in recreational activities taking place in Pike National Forest that borders our property on three sides. The activity that gives us the greatest worry is recreational shooting.

We host children from all over our country and the world. I know one family we lost for sure due to recreational shooting near our property, and I am sure there are more due to the amount and the consistency that scares our campers and staff. While we have had many instances of people shooting near our property, the worst happened in the summer of 2019. A group of men, less than a 100 yards from our property line, got out of a vehicle, lined up in a line and all fired high power rifles in the "wetland" parallel to our property. Our boy campers and staff saw this happen and it caused a panic. Two of our horses were injured, not by bullets, but because they tried to flee our corral, near the shooters. One suffered a severe cut on her leg that took over 3 months to heal, and the other a severe cut on her face that hit an artery. Luckily our camp nurse was an ex ER nurse and was able to control the bleeding until our vet could arrive. She saved that horse's life. It is only a matter of time before something worse happens. I have witnessed people not knowingly shooting toward our property.

After the above incident, we have been in contact with Nick Walters, a patrol captain for the Forest service. With his help we were able to have a forest service no shooting sign placed in the forest along our property line. While we are grateful for this we would like to see the area be closed to recreational shooting. Nick has continued to be helpful, and has put us in charge with the South Park Ranger District. After this incident Park County Sheriff even stationed a deputy in Lake George so they could respond to our area in a timely manor. We would love nothing more than to see the area around our camp closed to recreational shooting.

We have a Use Permit for the National Forest for hiking and horseback riding. In the last 10 years, since fire mitigation has taken place, there as been an increase in shooting in the forest which has prohibited our use of the forest, which you know we pay for. You deemed our location as the urban interface for forest mitigation. I would think that should say enough about recreational shooting in this area of Pike National Forest. There are many homes that border this section of forest yet people shoot freely not knowing where houses, children, people and pets are located. We have seen people shooting trees, forest service signage, foldable chairs, coolers, and other camper materials with large caliber guns. These are things that they leave behind for myself to clean up before I send my campers and staff into the forest.

I understand that as Americans we have the right to bear arms and recreationally shoot in the National Forest. I respect that 100%. I do not see this a 2nd amendment or guns right issue, I see it has a human safety and rights issue. I have spoken with recreational campers in the forest who have left because of the amount of unregulated shooting that takes place. I do feel this action shouldn't take place in the urban interface, as you call our area. I am all for the designated shooting ranges that come with this project.

I am more than willing to speak with you all more about this issue in detail. If there is anything else that I could provide to make sure this project is a success please let me know.

Thanks

