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First name: Tim

Last name: McElravy

Organization: Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp - Wenatchee Valley YMCA

Title: Camping Services Director

Comments: Mr. Jeff Rivera

District Ranger

Wenatchee River Ranger District

Leavenworth, Washington

Dear Mr. Rivera

My name is Tim McElravy and I am the Camp Director of the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp on the North Shore of the Lake right next door to the state park. I have lived and worked here at lake Wenatchee for more than 20 years. My concerns are for the overall Forest health and threats annually from wildfire. I was here in 1994 when the Round Mountain forced the evacuations of both Camp Zanika and the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp. We have worked extensively in my time here to Fire-wise our own property as well as working with the State Park to reduce fuels along our shared property lines. Despite our efforts, the threat of a wildfire in our area continues to threaten the health and safety of our campers and guests as well as the residents of the Lake Wenatchee/Plain community. Nationwide many youth summer camps such as ours are seeing drastic increases in our property and liability insurance rates (or being dropped altogether) due to losses suffered in the California and Colorado wildfires in recent years,(our rates have increased more than 50% since 2019).

Fire has threatened our area many times. In 2005 the Dirty Face Fire had our camp on a level 2 evacuation notice. In 2013 an abandoned camp fire in USFS Property sparked a wildfire on North Shore Drive, burning one house and threatening the homes of several others (that was a scary day!). In 2014 the Chiwaukum Creek fire burned nearly 14,000 acres and threatened the community of Plain. In 2015 the Wolverine Fire had us all on edge as it crept closer and closer to our community.

There is a public beach just a few hundred meters up lake from the YMCA Camp where people camp every summer. Just last summer on four different occasions after the Burn ban was in effect I confronted and educated naive/ignorant campers about the burn ban, fire danger to our Forest, and the fact that my camp full of kids is down wind from their raging camp fire. Over the years that I have lived here I have visited that spot several times to find a smoldering camp fire that had it not been for my being there (or sheer dumb luck) may have sparked a wildfire and likely burned into our camp.

The point I am hoping to drive home is that we can fire-wise our property all we want but the next fire that starts on Forest Service land could very well severely impact our camp, and the homes of all our neighbors. I urge the USFS to make treating and managing the health of the forests (fire-wising, fuel reductions, building and maintaining fire breaks) surrounding the Lake Wenatchee/Plain Community a top priority.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tim McElravy

Camp Director - Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp

Volunteer Fire Fighter/EMT - Lake Wenatchee Fire & Rescue