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Comments: Wednesday, September 11, 2024

Russell L. Hanson Jr.

District Ranger

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Pleasant Grove, UT 84062

Subject: Do Not Reconstruct the Emerald Lake Shelter in the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness -- Emerald Lake Shelter Reconstruction Project #66370

To USFS Chief Randy Moore, Intermountain Forester Mary Farnsworth, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest Supervisor David Whittekiend, and Pleasant Grove District Ranger Russell L. Hanson Jr.:

I am disheartened to learn that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) claims its proposal to reconstruct the Emerald Lake Shelter would improve the wilderness character of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness. In reality, the agency's proposal would seriously degrade this Wilderness.

"It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment."

-- Ansel Adams

The Wilderness Act prohibits structures, with a very narrow exception for those that are the minimum necessary to preserve Wilderness. This out-of-place hut not only detracts from the Wilderness, but also fails to meet this Wilderness Act requirement.

The USFS's proposal to use helicopters and build a new improved structure is antithetical to Wilderness and adds insult to injury. It is a perversion of the Wilderness Act to declare such a structure is part of the wilderness character of the area when the Wilderness Act clearly precludes structures.

The USFS's own wilderness policy recognizes that a structure is not needed for visitor use, stating that visitors must be prepared on their own to face "inherent risks of adverse weather conditions, isolation, physical hazards, and lack of rapid communications, and that search and rescue may not be as rapid as expected in an urban setting."

The USFS's first responsibility is to protect the wild character of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness, rather than any structures such as the Quinoset hut, which degrades the area and is not necessary to administer the Wilderness.

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

-- Aldo Leopold

To adhere to the Wilderness Act, the Forest Service must adopt an alternative that lets the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness be wild by allowing the metal remnants of the Quonset hut to fade with time, or by using wilderness-compatible means, such as non-motorized/non-mechanized tools, to remove it.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please do NOT add my name to your mailing list. I will learn

about future developments on this issue from other sources.

Sincerely,  
Christopher Lish  
San Rafael, CA