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July 12, 2025

Ben Kraja, District Ranger  
Pleasant Grove Ranger District  
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest  
390 N 100 E  
Pleasant Grove, UT 84062

Subject: Public Comment in Support of the Emerald Lake Shelter Reconstruction Project

Dear District Ranger Kraja,

I write to express my full support for the Emerald Lake Shelter Reconstruction Project on Mount Timpanogos.

The Emerald Lake Shelter holds a unique and irreplaceable role in the heritage, safety, and wilderness character of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness. For decades, this modest yet vital structure has served as a life-saving refuge for thousands of hikers, scouts, and visitors who find themselves exposed to sudden and dangerous alpine weather. Its presence has demonstrably protected lives and minimized emergency rescue incidents in a region known for unpredictable conditions and high foot traffic.

The necessities and realities are this: Timpanogos is an unforgiving environment where weather can change quickly and strike hard. What may begin as a clear summer hike can rapidly shift to lightning, hail, whiteout conditions, or freezing temperatures-even during peak hiking season. Over the years, the demographics of those climbing the mountain have changed. Many hikers are now less experienced or inadequately prepared for alpine conditions. As a result, emergencies can escalate quickly, putting not only the hikers at risk, but also the brave men and women of local search and rescue teams, often requiring costly and dangerous helicopter extractions. Please allow this structure to be rebuilt and maintained as a measure of necessity and public safety.

Beyond its function as an emergency shelter, the Emerald Lake Shelter is deeply embedded in the cultural and historical landscape of the Wasatch Mountains. Generations of Utahns and outdoor enthusiasts recall it not just as a physical structure, but as a symbol of stewardship, preparedness, and respect for wilderness values. Its legacy is woven into the collective memory of our community.

Reconstructing this shelter in harmony with the wilderness character aligns with both the intent of the original structure and the Forest Service's stated goals under the 2003 Land and Resource Management Plan. By restoring this shelter, the Forest Service reinforces its commitment to responsible recreation, public safety, and the preservation of heritage in one of Utah's most iconic alpine environments.

As a passionate advocate for the preservation and responsible use of American Fork Canyon, I respectfully urge the Forest Service to proceed with the reconstruction of the Emerald Lake Shelter. It is not only a safety imperative, but a moral and historical obligation to protect those who seek to experience the awe and majesty of Mount Timpanogos.

Sincerely,  
Mark Allen  
Protect and Preserve American Fork Canyon