

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/28/2016 8:00:00 AM

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Title:

Comments: 2-26-2016

To: Forest Supervisor David Myers, Attn: Cindy Dias
204 West Alma St. Mt Shasta, CA 96067

First of all I would like to thank you for letting Rhonda Possy and Brenna, the map maker help me identify the few King Bolete concentrations left in the Elk flat area. She understands the negative effect to the area caused by the thinning and ground disturbance from the recent projects. The type of logging and thinning in the areas south of Pilgrim Creek that was the beginning of this project has resulted in the loss of 2/3 of mushroom beds. So far this project has eliminated 7-8 tons of mushrooms. This can be proven. These mushrooms in our area generate a significant amount of money to you and the surrounding towns which I will talk about later. The income generated is yearly. A very conservative estimate would be 50-100 cars per day on Pilgrim Creek Road going mushroom hunting x 2 people per car X Gas\$25XFood \$20 = \$2000-\$4000 a day being spent locally in McCloud, Mt Shasta, Weed and Dunsmuir.

The value of joy that families have hunting mushrooms cannot be calculated. Picking mushrooms is a generation to generation activity that could soon be lost without intervention. A practical and reasonable solution to thinning and logging the area is what the public deserves in order to maintain the mushroom concentration and the public needs your help in doing so.

Here is a little history of Elk Flat to go along with your 1944 photo shown on the attached labeled page 31. In the 30s and 40s my father and his father were picking mushrooms there. As you can see the areas have been marked and are the same areas we are now trying to save. I see no reason not to save these areas now because as shown on your map the areas that we want saved were there then. A little known fact about mushroom hunting began in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Italian immigrants came to McCloud, Mount Shasta, and Weed area for the work that was available in the lumber industry. As the men worked in the woods they were the first to find the Bolete. In the old country this particular mushroom was used in every day cooking from sauces to soups. It did not take them long to figure out that these were the same as back in the old country. This is where the tradition from the old country came to the new country and they were again at home.

Using these pictures from page 31, I would like to show the areas that need to be saved.

Using the map D-4, I would like to show two Roads that we would like to keep open for mushroom hunting only in the months of April 15 to July 15. Road one goes out to the Island Road and Road two goes into the last untouched king Bolete patches left in the area. This is what we are trying to save. The same thing was done to the roads at Medicine Lake years ago and it still works.

The Island road as we call it is a very active wildlife area. Ash Creek and the dead trees are there along with the bigger trees. I cannot name all the wildlife there but one of our most favorite is the wild turkeys that show up in the spring. The mushroom season starts about the time as the turkeys roost in the pines. The children love to see and hear the turkeys. I have identified some of the area but we could use a little bit more for this reason alone. Even the turkeys don't like being out in the open. I would hope whoever from the US FS checks on the birds and other small animals takes the time to look and listen and see how many of them flourish in the area.

Last year off of Road 2 some old-timers came into the area to hunt mushrooms. They are from South San Francisco. Their names are Bruno, Franco, Aldo and Llorenzo. They have been picking there for 70+ years. They

come here and stay in McCloud for the season. They were so upset at the way the logging had been done to this area. They could not remember where their spots were. They were lost. I took them to where their spots were because I've seen and talked to these guys over the years and I know where the spots were. The only mushrooms they were able to find were old sunburnt ones in the grass. I felt bad. I took them along with my grand daughter, Cara and grandson, Connor across the road to a spot I have. I've defined that spot on your map as an area to save. These gentlemen got many nice mushrooms. The grandchildren thought this was a nice thing to do for them but asked why I showed them my spot. I told them that when I was young and just starting mushroom hunting in the area that Bruno and Lorenzo's father showed my father where to hunt Elk Flat mushrooms.

I told the old timers of the new logging that was going to happen here from last year's project. I explained to them the closing of the roads and where that would happen. I do not want to say what they told me about the USFS but it was not nice. This was the final blow to them on mushroom hunting. I told them that I would include them in the letter to you.

In the past, logging did not negatively impact the areas for mushroom hunting because skid trails were designated and everything was falling toward the trails. The smaller trees were left. We could go out and ask the loggers to be careful of the area and they would do their best. Of course it always cost you a few mushrooms. In the 80s the USFS started to burn the floor of the woods. This was done first off Pilgrim Creek Road, West of the experiment station and the old nursery. This did not work out to the benefit of the mushroom concentration. The burn was so hot around the big trees that still today there is no mushroom life around them. This area has lost tons of mushrooms from the burning. Then the grass came and it choked out the rest. In the late 80s the word of mushroom hunting became known to some of the people outside of the community. They came in and raked and trashed the area. But what were we going to do about that, it's America.

Very few locals have benefited from the loggers working on the project in the McCloud Flats area. When the project is done they are gone. More people have benefited from the McCloud mushroom festival. The festival is a big event every year and much money is spent and made. During the mushroom the McCloud Chevron, Reginato's Market, Floyd's frosty and the adjoining trailer parks and resorts highly benefit. People from out of the area including Bruno and the boys rent rooms from a lot of the local families. The amount of money spent in the local communities is significant and returns yearly for the entire mushroom season.

Road two goes into the heart of the biggest mushroom concentration left in Elk Flat. This does not include the area that was ruined by the last thinning project. This road is vital to the young and old alike who pick here. Most cannot walk the distance from Pilgrim Creek Road. The last logging in this area did not help. The ground was so torn up that the beds are now gone. The decision to burn in this area will only damage it more. Burning is not a good idea. The USFS started this in the 80s and it completely ruined the mushroom habitat as you well know. Over the years logging has been done out there many times but it was with skid trails and selective cutting. Grass would come back in the trails but overall it had no major impact. After burning the whole area turns to grass and the mushrooms get choked out. The few that come back the next year after burning are not able to fully develop and become sunburned due to no cover. In my experience there are four things that need to happen for the king Boletus to grow. They need moist soil, cool temperatures, good groundcover, pine needles and cones. They need shade. They need to be able to mature in order for them to reproduce. After the last thinning project, there are none of the above except in a very few spots. Last year there was a lot of grass after the thinning. If you burn again, mushroom hunting will be all over. I can show you examples of areas that grass is 2 feet deep from past burning. This is where some real management is needed in our forest.

In the areas I am trying to save the King Boletus, the needles from the trees are 4 inches to 18 inches deep. These, as we call them, are where the big boys are. We do not pick all of them. The bump coming up through the needles can reach 15 to 18 inches high. At this point you see a bright yellow area approximately 8 to 20 inches wide where they can release their spores for more to grow elsewhere. They can reach up to 5 pounds. It's like raising bees, no queen no bees. The area that was just done had flourished with exceptionally large specimens.

Now they are gone.

Everything I have expressed I can prove. I have talked about this with Rhonda. She would like to come out and monitor the situation but I still will have to blindfold her because these are secret spots. As I've said we know where all the big boys are and all the good pickers leave them alone. On Road two you can go out there on the weekend and see so many families with their children picking. This is been handed down from generation to generation.

Yes, there are some areas left that could use some responsible thinning, tree removal and logging. Thinning used to be done by hand in sensitive areas and not by machine. We are not talking about a big area that needs to be saved. Thinning in some areas and proper felling and skidding would go a long ways for the both of our quests. I know this because I was a logger/timber faller in the area when champion owned the mill in McCloud.

There is no better feeling than taking your family out on the weekend and telling them about papa's spots or grandpa's tree. You can stand back and let them pick mushrooms. It would be distressing if my grandchildren asked me what happened to this area and I had to tell them that there was no way to save the mushroom hunting spots. These children are our future. Do we want them to think that the United States forest service will not help maintain the forests? I want to teach my children to respect our forests and as I have said I will work with you to try to save some of the areas that are left. I would ask again that if you would let people access the two roads for mushroom hunting only from April 15 to July 15. This would help a lot of the older and younger people. I understand that the long rifles or going to get their spot left alone. I have no problem with that as we see and talk with them during our outings. They are friendly and when they leave the area it is the same as they got there. They are respectful of our area.

I write this letter trying to help you understand the mushroom resource we have in the McCloud flats. The mushroom resource has never been taken into account with any of the US FS projects. I have always supported the US FS and want to make our forests better. I own a lumber yard in Mount Shasta and my living depends on a well-managed forest that can be used by everyone and not be shut down. But it's time to make a stand as we are down to the very last area out there that needs to be saved for future generations to enjoy. My granddaughter Cara who is in the fourth grade has been telling all her friends about this and she wants her class to do a study on mushroom hunting and the effects of logging and thinning. So far the little bit of input she has gotten about how the forest is being managed is negative. Yes she is pro mushroom. But from what she sees so far she has not been impressed. Rhonda has met her. In closing I would like to still work with you so we can save an important resource and be able to restore the meadow. Before the final map is made on these areas I would like to get with Rhonda to make sure the perimeters are right. 20 to 30 feet off could be undesirable.

I would like to point out what the USFS did to another one of the big mushroom beds on the last thinning project next to Ash Creek. X marks the spot on the following page. I was told and read that you would only work thinning and logging when there was little chance to disturb the forest floor. Well, that did not happen hear. There is a skid trail on the East side of Ash Creek that is apx. 20' wide and 3 + feet deep in spots, big spots. This whole area is so torn up that last year even the lizards moved out. The best part of this is I can show you this skid trail on google earth from space. The only way I can figure out how this happened is it must have been Christmas vacation and no one was around to stop it. Sorry about the comment, but this really made a lot of people mad. Now, how do we believe your going to do what you say you are? This area is gone. If this was your purpose, then the public needs to see this and I would like to know from you how this will not happen again. I hope this wasn't done on purpose. This is an area that should be shown on one of your field trips. I don't think the people will be happy. I've read that one of the reasons you want to close the road that goes through to the top of Elk Flat was the standing water that's in the tire ruts. Well where the skid trail is, it will be a long lake. Me and many other pickers have gotten mushrooms here as the waters recede. This area, on a good wet year and lots of snow on the mountain, always floods, has forever. When that happens this year, we are going to have a very dangerous

spot. If someone is walking through the area and thinks it's only 2-3 inches deep, someone could fall in.

When this area floods you could still go out and pick around the trees that were above the water level. This year when this happens, because you never left any ground cover or small trees for erosion control, Pilgrim Creek Road will be a nice place to back up to and fill your truck with sand and gravel that was washed down. Sorry again for the negativity, but this was bad.

In closing, thank you again for letting me voice my concerns. I hope we can work together so we can both benefit from your project. I have attached a list of people who are with me on this. If you need more people to sign this letter, give me one week and I can get a lot more. 95% of the people don't see your small, publications in the news paper.

Thank You Again, Phil Facchin
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