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SIERRA CLUB



M.

Houston Regional Group
P.O. Box 3021
Houston, Texas 77253-3021
713/895-9309

January 2, 2001

Mike Dombeck
Chief
USDA, Forest Service
P. O. Box 96090
Washington, D. C. 20090-6090

Dear Chief Dombeck,

On behalf of the Houston Sierra Club I applaud your establishment of a ~~Director~~ for Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers within the Forest Service's organizational structure. This action places Wilderness on a par, organizationally, with timber, range, recreation, and fish & wildlife resources. It also removes Wilderness from the shadow of recreation which tended to reduce the attention Wilderness deserves.

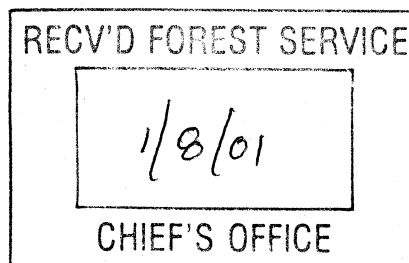
We fully support your actions to raise the visibility of Wilderness as well as the need for Wilderness protection. We support your directive, to find agency funding to hire 100 Wilderness stewards, so funding in the field is sufficient to maintain Wilderness rangers where they can monitor conditions and contact visitors. This will make a real difference in the five East Texas Wilderness Areas that are located in Sam Houston (Little Lake Creek Wilderness Area), Davy Crockett (Big Slough Wilderness Area), Sabine (Indian Mounds Wilderness Area), and Angelina National Forests (Turkey Hill and Upland Island Wilderness Areas).

If there is anything the Houston Sierra Club can do to support and assist your efforts in sustaining these endeavors please let me know. Thank you again for your support for Wilderness and Wilderness protection.

Sincerely,

Brandt Mannchen

Brandt Mannchen
Chair, Forestry Subcommittee
Houston Sierra Club
Lone Star Chapter
5115 Maple
Bellaire, Texas 77401
H713-664-5962, W713-640-4313



BRINGING RIVERS TO LIFE



American Rivers
FOUNDED 1973

January 8, 2001

Chief Michael Dombeck
USDA Forest Service
201 14th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Re: Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Program

Dear Chief Dombeck:

As President of American Rivers, an organization whose mission includes growing and safeguarding the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, I am extremely pleased to hear of your decision to strengthen the Forest Service's Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. Thank you for taking this proactive step to ensure the "crown jewels" of the National Forest System are not carelessly degraded, and can continue to enrich the lives of all Americans.

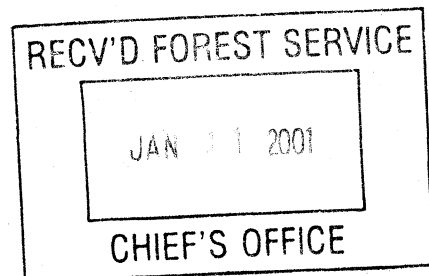
Your decision to create a director-level Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers position and to hire 100 new field staff comes at a time when wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers we have fought to secure recognition for are at risk. I am confident the course of action you have proposed will send a strong message within the Forest Service that these areas are indeed unique, and their stewardship is one of the agency's highest callings.

Increased field staff will not only allow the Forest Service to do a better job of fulfilling its stewardship mandate, it may also allow individual Forests to more carefully evaluate all rivers for their natural, historic, cultural, and recreational values, and to make appropriate recommendations to Congress regarding future protection. Taking time to carefully assess the intrinsic values of all outstanding, free flowing rivers and wilderness areas is particularly critical now, when many Forests are revising their management plans, and when increased development and resource extraction pressures may present a significant challenge to the Service.

Your understanding of the importance of wilderness and free-flowing rivers to this nation, and of the Forest Service's immense responsibility as protectors of some of our nation's most spectacular places, will serve the American people well. American Rivers looks forward to exploring new opportunities to work with you and your new Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers staff, and we thank you for your leadership and vision.

Sincerely,

Rebecca R. Wodder
President





FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER

PO Box 9241 Moscow, ID 83843

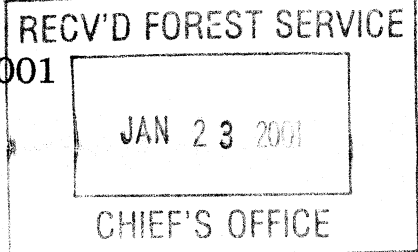
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www.wildrockies.org/foc

January 16, 2001

Mike Dombeck
Chief, US Forest Service
Washington, D.C.



Dear Chief Dombeck:

This letter is to thank you for your recent announcement of the creation of a Director for Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers. This is an important step in protecting these most crucial of all our public lands. Also, the establishment of 100 new positions as Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers stewards seems to signal a new commitment on behalf of the agency to protect these areas after years of institutional neglect. In your letter of December 29, you eloquently noted:

The Forest Service manages one third of the National Wilderness Preservation System and over 40 percent of the miles of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. These resources are among the most untrammelled and untamed vestiges of our nation's heritage. In an increasingly developed landscape and urbanized society, these wild places where natural processes dominate "and man is but a visitor who does not remain" are essential reminders of our pioneer heritage and spirit. These truly are the "crown jewels" of the nation's landscapes and as such deserve to be managed in such a way as to enhance their recognition and value to the nation.

We concur with your wise direction and ask that the Forest Service new director of Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers live up to the ideal of Wilderness and Wild Rivers by adjusting the agency's course on three areas that directly affect Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

First, discard the new recreation policy that allows degradation to continue inside designated Wilderness Areas. The non-degradation policy that the agency

supported since the passage of the Wilderness Act until recently is the only policy consistent with your recognition that Wilderness be, "untrammelled and untamed vestiges of our nation's heritage." Furthermore, it is not in violation of the Wilderness Act. The new recreation policy violates the Act by allowing degraded areas inside designated Wilderness.

The policy of non-degradation is working. An example from the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness shows how. In the latest state of the Wilderness report the managers state:

...our monitoring data shows a continuing, generally upward, trend in sites at problem areas. This is good news and reflects the efforts by wilderness professionals and volunteers to rehabilitate sites that do not meet standards, and also the natural recovery process we observe when, for various reasons, use of a site is reduced.

Those who say degraded areas can't be recovered in Wilderness have been proven wrong by the good work of on-the-ground wilderness rangers. The spirit of your recent announcement vindicates the quiet and tireless work of the agency's wilderness staff. I am sure you would agree it is to those committed people to whom your recent announcement is dedicated.

Second, the first task of the new director should be to make sure that the agency recognizes, as you correctly noted, that the Wilderness Act mandates Wilderness Areas be "wild places where natural processes dominate." Too often, we have seen agency proposals to manipulate inside Wilderness Areas based upon specious claims of forest health or some vague concept of what the area looked like in 1850. One recent example is from the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, the largest contiguous Wilderness in the lower 48 states. Here the Forest Service approved several agency-ignited fires at times when natural fires don't burn. The real reason for this project, which we uncovered in a Freedom of Information Act request, was to generate more elk forage. It was also discovered that the agency had entered into partnerships well before any NEPA was done on this project. Nevertheless, this project has been approved despite citizen comments and appeals.

Again, as you noted, Wilderness is about natural processes in perpetuity. It is not ponderosa pines per acre, number of acres burned per year, or some mythological historical snapshot in time.

Third, we urge you to end the preferential treatment given to the industrial recreation industry and entities like the American Recreation Coalition. Frankly, we have been surprised that the agency participates in high-level, closed-door conferences with these groups. Your wisdom in recognizing the improper incentives and inappropriate relationship with the timber industry

that characterized the agency's post-war years should be a lesson for the future. The powerful industrial recreation community is "partnering" with the Forest Service in the same way and it bodes ill for the integrity of our public lands, the larger public interest, democratic processes, and the credibility of the agency as a professional and independent agency serving all of the public.

Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers should be free of industry's disproportionate interest. The recent decision on the illegal yet permitted outfitting and guiding resorts on the Salmon River proves how an industry dictates policy that is contrary to both the Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts in our crown jewels.

Once again, thank you for creating a director position and 100 new positions for Wilderness and Wild Scenic Rivers. As discussed above, we will look to the new director to uphold the ideal of Wilderness and Wild Rivers by:

- 1) scrapping the new recreation policy that allows for degradation in wilderness and re-invigorating the traditional non-degradation policy that has been working and complies with the Wilderness Act;
- 2) directing the agency to oversee Wilderness Areas for natural processes in perpetuity; and
- 3) ending the preferential treatment given to the recreation industry.

We thank you for your decision, and we hope that it will lead us down the path that maintains our Wilderness and Wild Rivers heritage intact for future generations of Americans of all species.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gary Macfarlane", written in dark ink.

Gary Macfarlane

WILD WASHINGTON CAMPAIGN

(206) 633-1992 ext. 108 • wildwashington@hotmail.com • www.wildwashington.org • 4649 Sunnyside Ave. N., Suite 520, Seattle WA 98103

January 31th, 2001

Forest Service Chief
Mike Dombeck
Washington Office
201 14th & Independence, SW
Post Office Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090

Dear Mr. Dombeck-

Thank you for your recent decision to establish the position of Director for Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers. This decision demonstrates your commitment to conserving our nation's natural heritage. Your directives to hire one hundred new wilderness stewards and to maintain wilderness rangers in Wilderness areas further demonstrate this commitment.

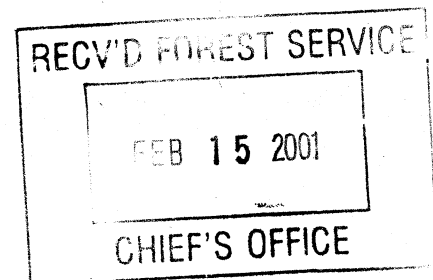
The US Forest Service has a long and proud history of managing Wilderness within its jurisdiction. From 9.1 million acres of Wilderness designated with the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, to 35 million acres in 37 states today, the Forest Service administers some of the wildest country remaining in this nation. Your recent action elevates Wilderness to the level commensurate with the task of administering this vast acreage and ensuring its wildness into the future.

We appreciate that you've made it a priority to manage our public land in such way as to enhance its recognition and value. You have been of great service to our nation.

Thank you,



Jennifer Ekstrom
Coordinator
Wild Washington Campaign



Alpine Lakes Protection Society, The Backpacking Club, Betts Meadows Wetland Preserve, Black Hills Audubon Society, Cascade Chapter - Sierra Club, Crystal Conservation Coalition, Earth Ministry, Eastern Environmental, Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, Friends of the Loomis Forest, Gifford Pinchot Task Force, Gonzaga Environmental Organization, Kettle Range Conservation Group, The Lands Council, Leavenworth Adopt-A-Forest, LightHawk, Methow Forest Watch, The Mountaineers, Mt. Baker Wilderness Association, Nat. Outdoor Leadership School - PNW, Native Forest Network, N. Cascades Conservation Council, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, Olympic Park Associates, Pacific Biodiversity Institute, Pacific Crest Biodiversity Project, Pend Oreille Environmental Team, Save Chelan Alliance, Spokane Audubon Society, Spokane Canoe & Kayak, Spokane Mountaineers, Umatilla Forest Watch, Upper Columbia River Group - Sierra Club, Washington Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, Washington Environmental Council, Washington Wilderness Coalition, Washington Wildlife Federation, The Wilderness Society