



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Cleveland  
National  
Forest

880 Front St., Room 5-N-14  
San Diego, CA 92188

Reply to: 2700

Date: June 1, 1990

Mr. Duncan McFetridge  
P.O. Box 475  
Descanso, CA 92016

Dear Duncan:

Our recent experience with the Sunshine OHV Trail public meetings and interaction with the various County planning groups indicates that the public places significant importance on quality unspoiled open space, quality wildlife habitat and the rich biodiversity that San Diego County rural areas still enjoy.

When you look at a map of the Cleveland National Forest you quickly note that both the Descanso and Palomar Ranger Districts are highly fragmented with private lands. These lands for the most part are the homesteads and ranches that were patented in the westward expansion prior to the establishment of the Cleveland National Forest. These early Ranchers laid claim to all areas with good grass and water. The more rugged, drier tracts of public lands that were never patented were incorporated into Federal Land Reserves in 1892 and in 1907 they became part of the Cleveland National Forest.

Over the years since 1907 several patterns emerged.

1. The Ranchers and the Forest Service forged partnerships through the development of range allotment plans. Under these plans the Ranchers livestock could graze the summer range on the National Forest for a fee and during the winters they utilized their home ranch range.
2. Over the years these ranch lands in combination with the National Forest lands comprised the joint land base that sustained San Diego County's mountain wildlife populations.
3. The Forest Service from its creation, was directed to develop plans to acquire interior acreage through land exchange, outright purchase, or a combination of both. Unfortunately, the dollars have never been available on a continuing basis to implement the Cleveland National Forest land adjustment plan.

As the County continues to urbanize, what little wildlife habitat still remains outside the National Forest is rapidly disappearing. The Cleveland National Forest and those privately held 3rd generation family ranches inside the Forest together with scattered Bureau of Land Management, Indian Reservation lands and State Park land will soon be the only wildlife habitat left in the County.

Unfortunately, we are learning that many of the family owned ranches within the Forest are facing a very uncertain future. The drought has greatly reduced the number of livestock that can be grazed on private and public lands. The public's



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demand for beef is down and there is constant pressure from Groups like "Earth First!" to remove all livestock from National Forest lands which the Ranchers rely upon for a profitable operation.

Two years ago Phin Spencer sold the Samagatuma Ranch. Fortunately Atlas Hotels purchased the property and it appears they plan to continue a ranching operation, at least for the time being. The owners of the 700 acre Roberts Ranch have plans to construct ~~135~~ custom built homes in an area of critical winter deer range. We recently learned that the Garboni Ranch has received a firm offer from Barrett Homes to purchase the Ranch and build 350 custom homes. Eventual urbanization of these large ranches within the Forest will not only effectively fragment what remaining wildlife habitat the County still has, it will also place large demands on the County for roads, water, water storage and water delivery systems, sewerage disposal and fire and police protection.

During the late 1970's the Forest Service and the County of San Diego entered into a partnership that provided the means to transfer the Kemp Ranch, specifically the Laguna Mountain Meadow property in the heart of the Laguna Mountain Recreation Area to public ownership. Initially Jim Kemp planned to sell the Ranch to a developer who planned to build condominiums throughout the meadows in order to settle an inheritance tax situation with the IRS. With the County of San Diego's help the Cleveland National Forest was able to acquire the Ranch. As a result of this joint venture the meadows continue to contribute to the Forests biodiversity base, the public has access to these meadows for hiking, picnicking, and camping and the Kemp family is still able to use the property for summer range. This turned out to be a "win win" solution for everyone.

Open space is vital to the quality of life that the County of San Diego currently enjoys. We are extremely interested in finding ways to maintain the existing ranch properties within the Cleveland National Forest as open space. As ranchers begin to succumb to todays costs of doing business and the pressures of developers we must find ways to offer suitable alternatives short of selling to developers. Development of these properties is not an answer that San Diego's indigenous wildlife can live with. There is no way that the current configuration of Cleveland National Forest lands can provide all the habitat requirements for San Diego County's remaining wildlife populations.

We on the Cleveland National Forest continue to work proactively with nonprofit organizations such as the "Nature Conservancy" and "Trust For Public Lands" in land exchanges and land purchases. Various citizens groups interested in maintaining our open spaces and public lands are also beginning to emerge and we will work closely with them as well.

If you have any additional thoughts or ideas on ways that we can work together to maintain San Diego County's remaining privately held land as open space within the Cleveland National Forest I would be most happy to receive them.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL J. ROGERS  
Forest Supervisor





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880 Front St., Room 5-N-14  
San Diego, CA 92188

Reply to: 2700

Date: August 17, 1990

Mr. Duncan McFeteridge  
Chairman  
Save our Forest and Ranchlands  
P.O. Box 475  
Descanso, CA 92016

Dear Duncan:

I have asked several of our Forest resource management specialists to review existing information from the National Forest System lands surrounding the Roberts Ranch property. Their reports are the basis of this response but are not included due to restrictions on the release of specific information on cultural resources and Threatened and Endangered plant and animal species. Several significant concerns for future management of the Cleveland National Forest related to the current proposal for development of the site were identified. Visual quality along the I-8 corridor, maintenance of biological diversity and preservation of cultural resource values are the primary concerns.

The Congressionally Designated Forest boundary is located just east of the community of Alpine and marks the leading edge of urbanization. From this point to the East, travelers along Interstate 8 have open vistas in all directions giving them a feeling that they are entering a natural open area. Due to the high use along I-8 our Forest Land and Resource Management Plan has adopted visual quality objectives which call for preservation and retention of natural scenic qualities along areas seen from the freeway. This open space is a significant resource value which can be offered by National Forest System lands especially in a highly urbanized area like San Diego County. From the Japatul junction (the boundary of Roberts Ranch) east, there are many in-holdings of private land along the I-8 corridor. In fact, nearly all of the major woodlands and meadows along the Freeway are in private ownership. Development of the Roberts Ranch would be the first of a potentially long list of developments along the entire I-8 corridor through the Cleveland National Forest. Should this development occur, the visual appearance of open wilderness currently provided by the National Forest will be lost.

Another major concern over the development of these woodland and meadow sites is the loss of biological diversity which is important to the functioning of forest ecosystems. Interconnected oak woodland and meadow vegetation provide nesting habitat for many bird species as well as key fawning habitat for deer. This habitat provides a corridor for movement of large mammals including deer and mountain lions between units of the Forest. The value of the surrounding chaparral lands as wildlife habitat would be impaired by the loss of these key areas. This loss can occur even if the vegetation is retained due to the effect of human activity from adjacent developed areas. A list of sensitive wildlife species found in the area is enclosed.

Caring for the Land and Serving People





The Roberts ranch area is made up of a mixture of both Engelmann and coast live oak woodland. Engelmann oak occupy the smallest range of any oak in the southwestern United States. Extensive conversion of Engelmann oak woodland for agricultural purposes and urban development have significantly reduced the extent of Engelmann oak throughout southern California to the point that 90 percent of the remaining populations are found in San Diego County. Some of these oak woodlands occur on National Forest System lands; however, most are on the intermingled private lands such as Roberts Ranch.

Threat of excessively high fire frequencies for Tecate cypress and other sensitive plant species is a significant concern for this area. The Guatay mountain area (immediately adjacent to Roberts Ranch) is a large outcrop of gabbroic rock. A number of Sensitive plant species are associated with the unique soil derived from this rock and are documented on the surrounding Forest land. Several sensitive plant species are also found on meadow habitats in the area (see enclosed list). A rare tree species (Tecate cypress) is found on the north slope of Guatay mountain. The Guatay mountain stand of Tecate cypress is characterized by its old age (approximately 130 years) which is considerably older than the three other sites where this plant occurs within the United States. This species is known from only 9 sites in the World. Studies have shown that along with increases in human population come increased fire frequencies. High fire frequencies (greater than one every 35 years) have significantly reduced the extent of Tecate cypress stands in other areas.

Roberts Ranch property has environmental conditions very favorable to prehistoric habitation by Native Americans. The conditions of plentiful water supply, vegetal material for food and medicinal use as well as plentiful oak groves to provide acorns, the staple food of the Diegueno/Kumeyaay, make it very probable that archaeological sites exist on the ranch. There are 10 known prehistoric archaeological sites on Forest land within a one mile radius of Roberts Ranch. Preservation of the physical evidence of this use is imperative for our eventual understanding of prehistoric native american cultures in San Diego County.

In addition to the above prehistoric values there are significant sites of historic value in the area. The famous Jackass Mail route passes within two miles north of the ranch and remnants of the historically significant Pine Valley Flume are also close by. There was mining activity in the area and the possibility of traces of early mining activities are conceivable.

Due to the great potential for loss of the above resource values on surrounding National Forest lands we support your to efforts to preserve these private in-holdings as open space. Actions which will transfer these lands to either public or private ownerships which will retain these values in the long run will benefit the public for generations to come.

Sincerely,

STEVE GALLEGOS  
Acting Forest Supervisor

Enclosure



## SPECIES LIST



List of Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Wildlife Species Inhabiting the Oak Woodland and Meadow Areas.

Endangered Species (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Listed) E  
Sensitive Species (U.S. Forest Service Listed) S  
Category II Species (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Listed) Cat II  
Management Indicator Species (Federal and State listed species) MIS  
Special Interest Species (Species of Local Concern on the National Forest) SIS

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
Golden eagle ( <u>Aquila chrysaetos</u> )	S
San Diego coast horned lizard ( <u>Phrynosoma coronatum blainville</u> )	Cat II
San Diego mountain kingsnake ( <u>Lampropeltis zonata pulchra</u> )	Cat II
Mule deer ( <u>Odocoileus hemionus</u> )	MIS
Mountain lion ( <u>Eelis concolor</u> )	SIS
California Quail ( <u>Lophortyx californicus</u> )	MIS
Orange-throated whiptail ( <u>Cnemidophorus hyperythrus</u> )	Cat II
Mountain quail ( <u>Oreortyx pictus</u> )	MIS
Late Successional Stage Chaparral Bird Sp.	MIS
Cavity Nesters/Users Bird Group	MIS
List of Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Wildlife Species Found in the Pine Creek Wilderness associated with riparian habitats.	
Least bell's vireo ( <u>Vireo bellii pusillus</u> )	E
Willow flycatcher ( <u>Empidonax traillii</u> )	Cat II





Species List Continued

SPECIES

STATUS

Yellow warbler  
(Dendroica petechia)

Cat II

Arroyo chub  
(Gila orcutti)

MIS

Rainbow trout  
(Salmo gairdneri)

MIS

Southwestern pond turtle  
(Clemmys marmorata pallida)

SIS





List of Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive and CNPS listed plant species which exist on lands surrounding Roberts Ranch.

- CNPS LIST B      CANIDATE FOR STATE LISTING
- CNPS LIST 4     PLANTS OF LIMITED DISTRIBUTION
- CR                STATE LISTED, RARE
- CE                STATE LISTED, ENDANGERED
- C1                ENOUGH DATA TO SUPPORT FEDERAL LISTING
- C2                THREAT/DISTRIBUTION DATA INSUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT FEDERAL LISTING
- C3c               TOO WIDESPREAD AND/OR NOT THREATENED.

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATE/FED STATUS</u>	<u>CNPS STATUS</u>
Engelmann oak ( <u>Quercus engelmannii</u> )		CNPS LIST 4
Tecate cypress ( <u>Cupressus guadalupensis forbesii</u> )		CNPS LIST 1B
Cuyamaca cypress ( <u>Cupressus arizonica stephensonii</u> )	/C1	
dense reedgrass ( <u>Calamagrostis densa</u> )	/C2	
San Diego locoweed ( <u>Astragalus oocarpus</u> )	/C2	
Orcutt's brodiaea ( <u>Brodiaea orcuttii</u> )	/C2	
Cuyamaca larkspur ( <u>Delphinium hesperium cuyamaca</u> )	CR/C2	
Parish's meadowfoam ( <u>Limnanthes gracilis parishii</u> )	CE/C2	
felt leaved monardella ( <u>Monardella hypoleuca lanata</u> )	/C2	
moreno current ( <u>Ribes canthariforme</u> )	/C2	
Cleveland's monkeyflower ( <u>Mimulus clevelandii</u> )		CNPS LIST 4

continued





SPECIES

STATE/FED STATUS

CNPS STATUS

Dunn's mariposa  
(Calochortus dunnii)

CR/C2

San Diego Gumplant  
(Grindelia hallii)

/C3c

False lupine  
(Thermopsis macrophylla semota)

/C3c

Ramona horkelia  
(Horkelia truncata)

/C3c

San Diego thornmint  
(Acanthamintha ilicifolia)

CE/C2

NOTE: All species listed above are USFS Sensitive species except Cleveland's monkeyflower and Engelmann oak.

