

Date submitted (UTC): 1/30/2015 1:32:32 AM

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RWD

Dear Sir and Madam,

By his own account, Christof Henkel, who is not even a citizen of our country, bought Dunton Hot Springs "15 minutes after seeing it. " I would assume it is nice to be a billionaire and not even have to do one's due diligence on a piece of property before purchasing it. I suppose that the assumption is that you can simply lawyer and bully your way to getting what you want. Christof decided soon after his purchase, that he wanted to put a gate across the entrance to his 183 Acre property, even though it was a National Forest Access for Winter, East and West Fork and Calico trails, according to your official maps. I rode my motorcycle up to that gate, as was my custom, to regain the ridge after a ride down Johnny Bull, and respectfully requested access to "our National Forest," and was granted it, only after telling him on the little box that the alternative was to ride through the river and that we didn't want to cut the banks of the river with our tires, as that caused erosion. That was about 1997, the last time I was granted access. You see, Christof does not like motorcycles. I don't know why. He has no problems with jeeps and snowmobiles and helicopters, so it is not a motorized problem. Had he known that virtually the only users of the trails surrounding his property were historically, and continue to be, motorcyclists, I presume he may not have purchased the property. I just don't think a non citizen, or any one individual for that matter, has any right to control "our" National Forest according to his personal wishes, even if he is a billionaire. The Forest Service didn't used to think so either, as they supported the citizenry in all of his previous attempts to privatize the forest.

I guess the Forest Service got tired of upholding their rightful stance, or just got tired of the whining and finally succumbed to the monied interests (I have no idea what he has spent in lawyer fees to date, but even he must have gotten tired of paying Steve Johnson after awhile, and got a bunch of law students to take up the cause. I also don't know how much money it takes to create a fictitious interest group like the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (sic?obviously there are no fishable waters on the entire trail system besides the West Dolores, which we crossed on the bridge before he illegally blocked the access! And, of course, any hunter who knew how to hunt, would not set up near a trail in that vast expanse of National Forest.) I'm sure some duplicitous lawyer suggested the tactic, likely after some Forest Service person told him "You have to give us something to hang our hats on." The latest tactic though, is really the pinnacle of deceitful, behind the scenes dealing. According to Mr. Padilla, in a conversation I had with him at the last scoping meeting, the reason that the Winter, East and West Fork trails West of the FS Rd. are proposed to be closed is that the new owner of the mining claim (Who could it be?) that is crossed by the trail (which was historically accessed by the trail and for which I'm sure there is a proscriptive easement) has put a quiet use restriction on the easement. Really?! Can you imagine how many privately owned mining claims are crossed by trails in the San Juans? I mean besides all of them since that is why the trails existed to begin with? I bet the non motorized access groups are salivating at the prospect of the Forest Service giving weight to that preposterous argument. (If a tree falls in the forest, and there is no one around to hear it?is it still a violation of the quiet use restriction?) If we allow private inholdings in the National Forest to put restrictions on the trails, "our" National Forest trail system is done for completely.

Of course there are many other seriously flawed aspects to the proposal, like the seasonal closure, the Burnett and Horse closures that obviate a safe escape route off the Calico in inclement weather or because of injury or mechanical problems, not to mention the deleterious effect on Rico businesses of not being able to get a hamburger, a drink, or gas reasonably from the trail system. The alleged user conflicts have been wholly fabricated by the anti motorized clan, whom I have frankly never encountered on the trails. Really though, what

gets my ire up is what I mentioned above, that a guy with enough money and enough lawyers can lay personal claim to my/our National Forest. It is just not right. It is not fair. It is just not just. I guess the lawsuits will continue, but I would encourage the Forest Service to get back on the side of the people. Sincerely Yours,
Steve Hilbert

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