

P. O. Box 559
Lone Pine, California
August 31, 1963

Hon. Harold T. Johnson
1031 House Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman:

Knowing of your thorough acquaintance with developments affecting the Inyo County area, I am sure you know of plans to set aside much of the Sierras hereabouts as wilderness area.

I was dismayed to learn recently, from the local Forest Ranger, that the creation of such a wilderness area threatens the actual destruction of borderline personal property of a non-commercial nature. It is to advise you of this situation that I am writing.

I am one of the founders of a philosophical group which owns 430 acres in the Tuttle Creek area near Lone Pine. In order to have a quiet retreat for our summer discussions, we built a lodge about 3000 yards up the canyon bordering our property. It took us twenty years, working in the summers with volunteer labor, to construct this 2000-square-foot building of natural stone and concrete, with concrete floor and heavy beamed roof and fireplace.

Now I am told that if the wilderness area is extended far enough outward, we will be asked to destroy this building.

Although this lodge is used only in the summers, when our members can get away from jobs in the cities, and although we must periodically repair the vandalism of hunters and campers, this meeting place is the very heart of our group. We put the biggest part of our money into it and the land near it, where several of us now reside permanently. Others live in the town of Lone Pine. To destroy it would destroy the purpose of years of effort on the part of many people.

We could never bring ourselves to do such a thing, which to our group would be akin to suicide of a sort. We would be bound to resist, regardless of consequences to ourselves.

Of course we hope you can prevent the development of such a situation. It is still early; apart from the question of the benefits of a wilderness area in this area -- regarding which we understand you entertain some doubts -- there is an easy alternative to destruction of our lodge. If action is taken before the boundaries are established, they may simply be drawn a few hundred feet west of the structure, which is far down the canyon and by no means in virgin territory.

We are sending also a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture and copies to the appropriate parties in the Forest Service. But we feel that the action which will preserve for us the result of twenty years' labor will be taken by our elected representative. We believe that you will, as we do, take the position that a wilderness area, if established, should take the form of preservation of existing wilderness country -- not the creation of a wilderness by destroying personal property.

We still have documents which we were given, thirty years ago, assuring us that our property in the National Forest would be allowed to remain for us and our descendants as long as we abide by the rules. This we have scrupulously done. Now it seems we need a strong hand to defend us.

We will appreciate anything you can do.

Respectfully yours,

Franklin F. Wolff