

08 October 2010

Director
Sierra National Forest Headquarters
1600 Tollhouse Road
Clovis, CA 93611-0532

Dear Director:

Three of my friends and I just completed 10 glorious days base-camped at Frog Lake where we enjoyed outstanding fishing and hiking in Big Margaret, Rainbow, Bathtub, and Coyote Lakes. Two of my buddies have been hiking in the Sierra for over 50 years. Another has hiked that long in Montana, Idaho, Washington, and the Sierra. This was the 39th annual hike for three of us, all of whom consider ourselves as "Official Geezers" because we are over 70 years old. The oldest, 76, lost much of his colon to cancer three years ago. The next, 74, had his prostate removed six years ago. I am nearing 73, and had a titanium shoulder replacement three years ago. The youngest of our group, age 67, was on dialysis for four years until he got his kidney transplant. But none of that has kept us out of the Sierra, and we plan to continue to enjoy your beautiful mountains as long as we can. John Cunningham and his High Sierra Pack Station staff made that possible for us in September, and we want to do whatever we can to help him succeed and serve others well into the future.

Three of us have been members of the High Sierra Hikers Association (HSHA) in the past. But five years ago, we recognized that, at our ages and health status, we would now depend on the packers and their stock to get our equipment and food up and down the hill. Because of the unreasonable positions taken by HSHA toward the Forest Service and the Packer Industry, we can no longer support them and we have terminated our support. We do not believe the Sierra exists only for younger, stronger elites who can still carry a full pack on their backs for 10 days. We believe we "Geezers" also deserve to get into the Sierras that we have come to love so much. But for us, and for many like us, only the Packers will allow that to happen. We resent the petty law suits brought against you and the packers by HSHA, and offer whatever support we might provide to assist in persuading the courts to look kindly on the great work you and your staff do, and to ensure that the Packer Industry is allowed to serve those of us who depend on them. Rather than an environmental menace as HSHA tries to position them, packers offer a valuable public service and neither the packers nor the Forest Service should have to spend your limited resources to address their nuisance suits. We now believe HSHA leadership may be profiting from their law suits, and their veiled motives of saving the wilderness is but a cover for their true objectives.

We thank you and your staff for keeping our Sierras so pristine. Hopefully, you and your packer partners will be allowed to continue doing that forever.

Sincerely,