

From: Leisha Baldwin (WMO) <leisha.baldwin@westinmammoth.com>
Sent: Friday, July 31, 2020 8:05 AM
To: Shannon Kendall <skendall@mono.ca.gov>
Subject: Board of Supervisors

Hello Ms. Kendall,

I am hoping you can pass my email along to the board of supervisors as I have heard they are looking for input from the community.

Currently, I do not think there is a one size fits all solution for our county issues, and I thank the board for their service during these difficult times. I think you definitely do not have an easy job right now nor will you be able to please everyone.

If you take a drive around the county, it is obvious that we are busting at the seams. Our spike in numbers is quite frightening as is the illegal camping and disregard for our community. I think another shut down of our county though would be economically devastating. It is already going to take years to recover from the three month shut down that was in effect. I personally feel that is not the answer, but we are in desperate need of education for visitors and enforcement. I am a firm believer that if people followed the COVID protocols, we could be open safely. I heard there is talk of limiting hotel occupancy, and I do not feel that is the answer as it will only push more people into illegal camping. At our hotel, when we tell people we are full, many of them say they will just sleep in their cars. At least when they check into a hotel or property management company we can educate them on how to recreate safely. By pushing more people into camping, we are only creating other health and environmental issues.

Many of our visitors right now are not familiar with the outdoors and camping. We need to educate them as much as possible. Do we need more signs as you enter the towns? Should the visitor centers be open as that is typically the first place tourists go? Can we place signage in retail wherever wood and other camping supplies are sold? More signage or law enforcement/forest service presence at the illegal spots people are camping?

Enforcement is also an issue. I do not understand the workings of all the agencies at play here, but what we in the community hear when looking for assistance with enforcement is either "not our Job" or "we don't have enough staff". I believe both those statements to be true, but we need to figure out how to enforce our policies and laws. Nothing Dr. Boo and the EOC put in place will work if there is no enforcement and accountability. I worry as I am starting to hear about community members driving around at night to enforce the no campfire orders. While I applaud their willingness to assist (and personally fear these campers are going to burn down our county), that has the potential to turn ugly.

I do not have the solutions to our current issues, but feel strongly that shutting down the county again will only create other health and environmental issues as the people are coming

no matter what. If there is anything I or my Westin team can do to assist, please don't hesitate to reach out. We need to solve this as a community.

Thank you,
Leisha

Leisha Baldwin

General Manager

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From: McGee Creek RV Park <mcgeecreekrv@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, August 1, 2020 6:05:18 PM

To: Stacy Corless <scorless@mono.ca.gov>; Fred Stump <fstump@mono.ca.gov>; John Peters <jpeters@mono.ca.gov>; Bob Gardner <bgardner@mono.ca.gov>; Jennifer Kreitz <jkreitz@mono.ca.gov>; Thomas Boo <tboo@mono.ca.gov>; Alicia Vennos <avennos@mono.ca.gov>; dtotheroh@inyocounty.us <dtotheroh@inyocounty.us>; jgriffiths@inyocounty.us <jgriffiths@inyocounty.us>; supervisor.pucci@gmail.com <supervisor.pucci@gmail.com>; mtillemans@inyocounty.us <mtillemans@inyocounty.us>; mkingsley@inyocounty.us <mkingsley@inyocounty.us>; william.dunkelberger@usda.gov <william.dunkelberger@usda.gov>; janette.cutts@usda.gov <janette.cutts@usda.gov>; Tamera.randall-parker@usda.gov <Tamera.randall-parker@usda.gov>; snelson@blm.gov <snelson@blm.gov>; randy.moore@usda.gov <randy.moore@usda.gov>; [BLM CA Web BI@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_CA_Web_BI@blm.gov) <[BLM CA Web BI@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_CA_Web_BI@blm.gov)>; lchapman@inyocounty.us <lchapman@inyocounty.us>; congressman.cook@mail.house.gov <congressman.cook@mail.house.gov>; wendilyn@mammothtimes.com <wendilyn@mammothtimes.com>; lunch@thesheetnews.com <lunch@thesheetnews.com>; Shannon Kendall <skendall@mono.ca.gov>; Scheereen Dedman <sdedman@mono.ca.gov>; kfoote@inyocounty.us <kfoote@inyocounty.us>; sm.fs.pressoffice@usda.gov <sm.fs.pressoffice@usda.gov>; dholler@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov <dholler@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov>

Subject: Letter/Comments Regarding Dispersed Camping and Reducing Occupancy in Campgrounds

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is in response to a Facebook post made by Stacy Corless on 7/29/2020 regarding the impact of dispersed camping and potentially lowering occupancy at campgrounds. Attached is a letter in response to that post. Please read in its entirety. Additionally, it is meant to be public comment for your upcoming meetings on 8/4 and 8/5.

I hope you take what we have said to heart and know that it is coming from a place of genuine concern over the safety of our County.

Sincerely,

Emily Forte, Park Manager
John Neubauer, Park Owner
Greg Jennison, Park Owner

August 1, 2020

Dear Mono County, the Town of Mammoth Lakes and all other Officials,

I am writing on behalf of myself, park manager and John Neubauer and Greg Jennison, park owners of McGee Creek RV Park. We are extremely concerned with the idea of reducing camping capacity to reduce the impact that dispersed camping is causing.

We understand the impact that dispersed camping is having on our public lands and we are extremely alarmed about it. We know many might comment that we are only sending this letter because we want to stay open to make money, but that is simply not the case and will only deter the real reason for this letter. Our concern is not monetary, it is for the safety of our community, our homes and our families. If you are truly wanting to decrease the impact our visitors are having on this county and our public lands, then shut it all down again; campgrounds, lodging and dispersed camping. Shutting all of it down is the direct solution to the problem. We are happy you are looking for a solution but decreasing capacity in a safe, monitored space will not reduce or deter people from dispersed camping.

Our visitors need and want a safe place to camp and that is something that we have been providing since we reopened. The more people that are in the campgrounds, the less that are out on our public lands. Let me share some of my experiences with you here at McGee Creek RV Park over the last couple months since we opened on June 3rd. During an average summer we may have to ask one site to remove themselves from the property for failing to follow our campground rules. In the last two months, we have asked between five to eight sites to remove themselves from the property! These visitors are NOT our normal Eastern Sierra visitors.

It's important to note that we review all our rules with every customer when they check-in and violations still occur. With no direction or information available for dispersed camping, you will get many more violations in an unsafe location.

Below is a list of the frequent violations and reasons these people were asked to leave this summer. Note: None of them are our regular customers and many, countless other customers committed some/one of these violations, mostly violations on fires or trash.

1. Hot ashes and raging fires still going after:
 - a. They have departed
 - b. And are still here (after they went to bed)
 - i. We do security nightly to ensure all is safe and fires are extinguished.
2. Heavy amounts of trash being left on sites and throughout the campground.
3. Drunk and disorderly.
4. Aggressive and threatening remarks made by campers to staff members and other campers.

The increase in these violations is alarming but it is being monitored and managed. Now imagine if these people, who are NOT the normal visitors to our area, were out on dispersed lands because of the decision to reduce capacity in safe campgrounds. That decision will only increase dispersed camping, and increase violations, not reduce it. Removing people from a safe, monitored site and pushing them out to disperse camp goes against solving the problem.

We believe that one of the issues is First Come, First Served sites. I have no less than 20 to 30 walk-ins and phone calls on Friday's and Saturday's with people looking for last minute sites. These are mostly tent campers with no plans and don't know the area. Many of them exhaustingly tell me they have been everywhere and they can't find anything and don't know what to do or where to go. Most of these people don't want to disperse camp. They want a bathroom, a fire ring and a safe space in a campground, all of which our campground and all the others are providing. If the rule became reservation only and first come first serve was no longer the way of acquiring a site, I believe it could significantly reduce the number of people coming here who are eventually being forced to disperse camp when they have nowhere else to go. I know there have been conversations with the Forest Service, as it is their lands that are being destroyed, but there has to be another option or way to close dispersed camping by declaring a local state of emergency. Shutting down the direct problem is going to have the impact you are seeking.

We were thankful that we were allowed to open, before the State allowed us to, because these people have been and still are coming here whether anyone likes it or not. It is clear that they can't be stopped and they are still coming in larger numbers than ever before. If they aren't able to go to a campground, where they are monitored and regulated, an increase of dispersed camping, along with an increase in trash and illegal fires will be the effect of that decision. This only makes things worse. Dispersed camping is already an unmanageable situation, so forcing campgrounds with safe manageable spaces to send people away with no option other than to go out onto public lands without knowledge of safe and responsible dispersed camping, is clearly not the answer.

We strongly encourage you to consider the solution from another angle and consult the people who have the experience of keeping campers in a safe and monitored place.

Thank you for reading our comments, we appreciate what you do for our County. I hope that you use them to make the right decision and we look forward to seeing positive changes in the future.

Sincerely,



Emily Forte, Park Manager



John Neubauer and Greg Jennison, Park Owners

From: cheri heringer <cheri.heringer@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, August 2, 2020 6:56 AM

To: Shannon Kendall <skendall@mono.ca.gov>; clerk@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov
<clerk@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov>

Subject: Take action now

To whom it may concern,

As a resident of this community and a healthcare provider here as well, I am sending a desperate plea for you to act on the dire situation we are currently in.

First, I must ask you, at what cost to this beautiful town and forest land do we pay to keep operating at this unprecedented level?.. (in the mist of a pandemic I might add). There must be a compromise that enables our businesses to maintain enough income to survive these trying times, yet still protect our town, residents and the environment. We are sacrificing what has taken years to preserve and build. You are allowing the destruction of the very things we cherish... what makes us a desirable destination for others.

The lakes basin is over crowded and at max capacity and MORE on any given day. We have people camping along Sherwin Creek road and other various unauthorized locations within the town limits.

They are leaving trash and having illegal campfires, risking us even further. They are camping in the parking lot of Eagle Lodge, with no bathrooms there and shooting fireworks at night. There is a total disregard for the rules and laws that keep our community safe.

The rental properties are operating at 100%. In addition, they are regularly over occupied and no one is monitoring or policing this. Because of this, units are producing extra trash which the trash service can not keep up with, so bins are overflowing. Because of this over occupancy, they have far more vehicles than they are permitted per unit, which produces huge parking issues. They block private residences and park in fire lanes. I am told by police and fire that it is private property so they won't get involved with either issue. The HOA says go to the rental companies. I have been told verbatim by employees of Mammoth Reservations that I had no business "monitoring" this and would not take any responsibility for the rental once the people were occupying it. I was put on hold, they refused to give me a supervisor name and told me to go to town council with my complaint. In addition I will note that the turn over of these units is often as short as an hour. I see the cleaning crews and housekeeping going in without masks and watch them clean without face coverings.

We have graffiti on trees and rocks, defacing our precious forest lands. Trails are over populated, thus trail cutting is eroding the trails.

NO ONE feels the need to mask or use face cover on trails even in extremely concentrated areas.

You have cut funding for Steve Searle, a valuable and iconic figure in our community. Now, with this surge of visitors, we are experiencing an increase in visible trash everywhere, overflowing trash bins, littering and pollution. Without Steve to help protect our wildlife, we are asking for trouble. We all know it takes but a minute for these bears, our precious treasures, to end up in the trash cans and end up too close to public. This interface can have tragic results for our bears, and undo what he has worked so hard to accomplish over the years.

Finally, as a health care worker, I am very concerned about the surge of Covid positives. The stress we feel is immeasurable. I am so proud of the courage I see in my fellow medurg/ICU RNs and RTs. They are risking their lives and their families daily. We are "making do" and doing what we can to accommodate the covid patients in our hospital. Our hospital is full of phenomenal hard working people, but we are considered a critical access hospital with limited resources, technology and the staff necessary to provide what is required for critical covid patients. We are doing our best with what we have. I might add that 8000 feet is NOT the place to be hospitalized for a respiratory illness. In addition, we are attempting to care for the our "normal" increased capacity of non covid patients and meet their needs as well.

In summary, while we all know that our community thrives on tourism, we must find a balance and find it fast. This is going to destroy our community or worse, harm our residence, all in the name of profit. Please stop just pretending to listen... take emergency action now. If our resources are stretched too thin, then the answer is simple... CAPACITY MUST BE LIMITED!!

It's enough stress on all of us to be worried about the health and welfare of our families, friends and fellow residents with respect to a pandemic. It's beyond stressful to deal with this added burden of excessive number of visitors who seem to have a complete lack of compassion, respect or regard for the laws and current mandates in place.

This is YOUR responsibility to us as our elected officials, law enforcement and tourism boards to act on this. WE, AS A TOWN HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE..You were elected or hired to your positions because we trusted you to represent us. Don't let us down.

Sincerely, Cheri Heringer



