

EUGENE, OREG., *March 15, 1968.*

Senator FRANK CHURCH,
Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands,
Senate Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR: Please include this statement in the printed record of your hearings of February 19, 1968, on the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness.

The Obsidians, Inc., of Eugene, Oregon, reaffirm their testimony to the Forest Service, that the proposed boundaries of the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness are too narrow to fully protect its rare values. We urge the adoption of the boundaries asked by the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs.

This wilderness area is already heavily used. The logging road built up Whitewater Creek has shortened the trail in to Jefferson Park, until the hike in can be made too easily. That park is the most beautiful high valley in Oregon, and one of the most beautiful in the United States. It is an alpine valley, with fragile soil and delicate plants, which already show erosion and wear along trails and at campsites. Certainly as many people as possible should have the chance to see this place—but only if their presence does not damage it for those who come later.

Overuse can be controlled in two ways. One is by putting buffer areas around a fragile spot, so that the trails to it are longer, and the ordinary kinds of recreation, of large camping parties and day hikes, takes place in the tougher, easier-reviving lower forests. The other way is by putting a limit on how many people go into the wilderness.

Last year the Forest Service told us that trips to wilderness areas had increased so much that a limit would have to be set on them, soon. Why not put aside a few more acres of wilderness, first?

Forest Service figures show that roadside recreation in national forests has increased 8 times in recent years while wilderness use has increased 3 times. More valleys are opened up for people who want easy trips, with every new logging road. Less country is left wild each time a hillside is clear-cut. The cut areas will regrow, and in 30 or 40 years will be perfectly good for ordinary recreation, thanks to good conservation practices. But the wilderness, cut, is gone. That is why our need is desperate, now, to preserve wildernesses, and make them large enough, if we can, to survive even heavier use.

Local lumbermen say that preserving trees puts people out of work. We have heard that several northwest power companies (Bonneville, Eugene Water and Electric Board, for instance) have made studies predicting that recreation will be Oregon's top industry within 10 to 15 years. We also hear that Forest Service studies predict a loss of one third of our lumbering jobs, *to automation*, within the same time. If this is so, any small loss, now, due to having scenery, will be far more than made up later, but the visitors who will come to see it.

The people attracted by wilderness are not only the one willing to hike in to it. A Wilderness, like a National Park, is a focal point. Knowing it is there, seeing pictures taken in it, driving to the edge to look up such a valley as that of Whitewater Creek, with Mt. Jefferson towering over it, walking a mile or two up a trail in untouched woods to a lake like Pamela or Marion: these are experiences everyone can have. But will the Whitewater Valley be further scarred with cutting, so that only a fringe of trees is left around the mountain? Will Marion Lake be full of motor boats? And will the hikers who do find time to go farther in, look back of them to see roads, motels and logged hillsides, not forest? Will they walk on trails as crowded as a city park?

After listening to testimony at its Salem hearings, the Forest Service added a corridor to the Wilderness, along the Pamela Lake Trail. Good. But more than a corridor is needed to insure against blowdown, or to keep habitat for plants and animals.

The Mt. Jefferson Wilderness needs the alpine Firecamp Lakes, somewhat like the lakes in Jefferson Park itself. It needs the lower approach lakes, Marion and Long, and the valley of Whitewater Creek, to be buffer areas to the high country, and for the marvelous way they frame the entrances to the mountain. Is it true that low-lying, heavy forest is what can *not* be preserved? Is it true that "anything can be wilderness if it has no trees on it"? That is an unpleasant statement, and one we hope we can have evidence to refute.

Respectfully,

DON L. HUNTER,
Chairman, Conservation Committee, Obsidians, Inc.
 ROBIN LODEWICK,
Conservation Committee, Obsidians, Inc.