

The lake is no longer stocked with fish. Brook trout survive in the lake, but the Forest Service closed it to fishing at the request of the Pueblo—perhaps illegally.

The Forest Service has made it known that August is the month of the Pueblo ceremonials at Blue Lake. The effect has been that practically no requests to enter the area are received in August. The area is positively closed the last 10 days in August.

Since 1959, the average number of persons permitted to visit Blue Lake has been 37 yearly.

The statement I am referring to is expressed in the report that comes to the committee from the House.

The statement is in there that the Pueblo Indians desire to limit access by non-Indians, and the Forest Service will not prohibit access.

Mr. Chairman, with only 37 permittees per year on the average since 1959, it is safe to say that access is limited.

I would like to skip, now.

Senator METCALF. I would say that perhaps even during the days of the Mountain Men, in the early pioneer days, as many people as that intruded upon this area.

Mr. LITTLE. I would say probably a little more than that, in the trapping days, the non-Indians came out there.

Senator METCALF. Before the Forest Service took over.

Mr. LITTLE. This was prior to the 1830's, 1840's.

Senator METCALF. Surely.

Mr. LITTLE. Let me start with something I think the committee hasn't heard here.

The proponents of H.R. 3306 have made much about the religious importance of Blue Lake to the Indians of Taos Pueblo. They have misled the Indian Claims Commission on this point, and their erroneous statements have persisted to this time.

In his testimony before the House committee, Secretary Udall quoted from the report of the Indian Claims Commission as follows:

In August of every year, the entire adult population of the Pueblo goes to Blue Lake for ancient religious ceremonies which have continued uninterrupted for centuries.

This area is used every day by at least a few Taos Pueblo Indians for private religious reflection.

These statements are simply not true. During the first week of September of this year, in the company of two Forest employees and two others, I visited Blue Lake. We were there with the concurrence of the Pueblo.

It was our intention to be the first non-Indians on the scene after the August ceremonials.

Few alpine lakes can compare to Blue Lake in placid natural beauty. It is perfectly round. The alpine spruce forest extends to and shades its banks. Its waters are unbelievably clear and unusually deep, giving the lake a unique rich blue color.

The Indians had left the area in a mess. Only a few new deposits could be found in the trash pit provided by the Forest Service. Papers, bottles, and cans were left where they had dropped.

Green trees had been felled. Only six or seven campfires were counted, but the remains were unburied, and the logs were left to smoulder.