



BOULDER MOUNTAIN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

1905 LINDEN DRIVE • BOULDER, CO 80304 • (303) 440-0235 • FAX (303) 440-5247

11 July 2011

Ms. Christine Walsh, District Ranger
U.S. Forest Service
Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests
Boulder Ranger District
2140 Yarmouth Ave.
Boulder, CO 80301

Dear Ms. Walsh,

Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District (BMFPD) personnel and equipment have just responded to the third human-caused wildfire in the last four months that started at or near the Left Hand Shooting Area (see list at the end of this letter). Over the past 25 years there have been numerous other fires that have originated in this area, which is just to the north of our District.

These fires threaten homes in the Boulder Heights and Rembrandt subdivisions of our District. The terrain is very steep and thickly forested, which - when coupled with the location's frequent high winds and low humidity - makes fighting any fire in the area difficult, dangerous, and urgent, as well as expensive.

To date (to our knowledge), there has been no loss of life or structure as a result of one of these fires, but it is our opinion that the likelihood of such loss is high, and perhaps inevitable if this area remains open to unrestricted shooting, camping, and off-highway vehicle activity. While no one can prevent all fires from starting in this area, the shooting range could be shut down, or improved and monitored, permanent fire pit use could be mandated, and a procedure for flexible fire restrictions could be enacted. It is



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in the overall interest of the community, and our District in particular, that these known threats be managed as effectively as possible.

It is the opinion of the BMFPD Fire Chief and Board of Directors that this area is a threat to public safety, and we hereby request that the Forest Service:

- A) permanently restrict fires in the Lefthand Canyon Shooting and OHV area to established fire pits in designated campgrounds
- B) establish a procedure that restricts use of the area when fire likelihood is high, taking into account current and predicted weather conditions including temperature, humidity, winds, and lack of recent moisture. When conditions suggest that the area is ripe for fire (which could include but not be limited to Red Flag Days or a Sheriff's Burn Ban in effect), the use of firearms, off road vehicles and open fires should be prohibited and the prohibition enforced
- C) establish a new, safer, designated shooting area in the burned section, with appropriate backstops (burned trees could be used), signage, and – preferably – monitoring.

Please let us know if there is additional information you need, or anything else we need to do to formalize our requests.

Recent Fire History, Lefthand Shooting Area, Boulder County, Colorado

1. Maxwell Fire, 26 June 2011 - 4000 Lefthand Canyon Drive, ¼ mile from the Shooting Area, from an abandoned campfire. 60 acres. Evacuations enacted within a one and a half mile radius of the fire, approximately 340 homes
2. Un-named fire, 2 June 2011 - 3700 Block of Lefthand Canyon Drive, caused by spark from shooting of steel bullets, 1.7 acres

" . . . firefighters faced steep terrain, rolling rocks from above and the "unnerving" sounds of leftover ammunition exploding in the blaze." (Boulder Daily Camera, 3 June 2011)



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3. Lefthand Shooting Area Fire (aka Lefthand OHV Area Fire), 11 March 2011 -
622 acres, approximately 223 homes evacuated

"The cause of the fire is not definitive, but based on the activities in the area it is likely it was caused by shooting." (Inciweb)

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Benson".

John Benson, Chief
Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Ramberg".

Eric Ramberg, President
BMFPD Board of Directors

COPY:

Glenn Casamassa, Forest Supervisor, U.S. Forest Service

Senator Michael Bennet

Senator Mark Udall

Congressman Jared Polis

Governor John Hickenlooper

Representative Don Beezley, District 33

Representative Deb Gardner, District 11

Representative Dickey Lee Hulinghorst, District 10

Representative Claire Levy, District 13

Representative Matt Jones, District 12

Senator Rollie Heath, District 18

Senator Jeanne Nicholson, District 16

Senator Brandon Shaffer, District 17

Boulder County Commissioners

Sheriff Joe Pelle



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Jeff Jahnke, Director and State Forester, Colorado State Forest Service

Rich Homann, Fire Division Supervisor, Colorado State Forest Service

Allen Owen, District Forester, Colorado State Forest Service