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December 20, 2000

Mr. Robert Dennee – Lands Staff Officer
Gallatin National Forest
PO Box 130
Bozeman, Montana 59771

Dear Bob,

When we met in November to discuss the status of the ATI between USFS and Sacagawae Meadows Ranch (SMR), I described briefly why my daughter, Cheryl Valentine and I purchased the Ross Peak Ranch from the Hammersmarks, and why the successful completion of the land exchange is important to us.

I thought it might be helpful to you and Nancy Halstrom for me to elaborate on those discussions.

As mentioned, we want to create a family compound in a natural setting that will serve my wife, Nancy, and me in the nearer term, Cheryl and her young family in the future, and her three children (now 7, 5, and 3 years old) in the distant future when they have families of their own. The pattern would be the same as we followed for the last 20 years at our Yellowjacket Ranch in Sonoma/Napa Counties of California. *6 w/*
and Helen
Ward

Yellowjacket Ranch is 1500 acres of meadows and mountain, overlooking Knights Valley. Presently, there is a Caretaker's House, Main House, barn and corrals. A Guest House burned down in a forest fire and has yet to be replaced. We lease the grazing rights to 5 DOT Cattle Company, mostly to keep the grass in check for fire prevention. We have kept the property in natural habitat, while all around us natural habitat and pastures are being turned into vineyards or housing. We do not allow hunting. Thus, we are host to deer, wild turkey, quail, several species of ducks and geese, bob-cat, mountain lion, fox, coyote, Golden eagles, falcons, and other birds and fur animals too numerous to list. The few roads to and through the property are single lane dirt and gravel. There are several miles of great riding trails that we use.

I mention Yellowjacket Ranch only because we have a similar vision for SMR. Already we have leased some of SMR land for cattle grazing to Lyle and Mert Woolsey, our neighbors to the North. In time, we plan to first build a Caretaker's house, barn and horse corrals, and later on a house for Nancy and me near the Caretaker's house. In the distant future, Cheryl would build a home for her family somewhere near us. In the too-far-to see future, Cheryl's children might each want a house of their own. So, potentially, over the next 20 years or so, there could be a total of six houses and barn in reasonably close proximity to each other (to simplify utilities distribution); most likely in Sections 5 and 6 (although we are not yet familiar enough with the property, post-exchange, to be very definitive about locations and layouts).

Since the engineers tell us there is no reasonable access from Bridger Canyon Highway into SMR's Section 20 (after the exchange), it will probably remain for recreational use, grazing, and perhaps timber harvesting.

Nancy and I love to hike and ride, so we would plan to spend Spring, Summer, and Fall at SMR, and Winter at Yellowjacket Ranch (where it gets too hot to do most anything in Summer; why we now spend our Summers at Lake Tahoe in Nevada). Cheryl and her family, on the other hand, like to ski in addition to riding; making SMR's proximity to Bridger Ski Bowl a real plus.

So, in summary, SMR will, over time, be a family retreat for recreational purposes, surrounded by natural habitat.

We look forward to a successful completion of the Exchange process, and to being your new neighbors.

Sincerely,



Cc: Joel Shouse
Cheryl Valentine