

25 November 1981

Mr. Jim Heatherington:
Division of Aeronautics and
Public Transportation
4383 Rickenbacker Street
Boise, Idaho 83705

Dear Mr. Heatherington:

Enclosed are copies of documents pertaining to the Taylor Ranch airstrip. In the memorandum of agreement between Jess Taylor and the University of Idaho it is stated that the airstrip shall be private rather than public. The 19 May 1969 letter to the State Department of Aeronautics shows that the issue of private vs. public status has surfaced in the past. I realize that the wilderness designation of surrounding U.S. Forest Service land has changed since the original agreement. However, the University very strongly urges you to support private status for the landing strip.

The Taylor Ranch property is a unique and valuable field facility for the Wilderness Research Center of the University. It provides access to one of the largest wilderness areas in the United States; but access not readily available except by air. The Taylor Ranch has a long history of highly significant research contributions. ~~fort Dyer Madras Herbasheef~~ operations for Dr. Maurice Hornocker's classic mountain lion studies and is once again the base for a study by Professor Hornocker and his graduate students. This new study on the ecology of unexploited bobcat populations was begun this fall and is scheduled to be completed in 1984. This is just one of the several research projects planned for the future. The enclosed Wilderness Center brochure shows the scope of wilderness projects planned for the next few years, many of which will be based at the Taylor Ranch. We are also intending to base three to four undergraduate students working on special projects of their own design at the Ranch during the summer of 1982, as well as in subsequent summers. These activities are only a portion of the combined research/education objectives of the Wilderness Center and the Taylor Ranch.

Changing the status of the Taylor Ranch airstrip from private to public status would interfere with the primary function of the property, i.e., a research/education wilderness field station. We already have difficulties with private pilots landing at the Ranch and leaving parties of clients to camp, fish or hunt. When it is explained that the Ranch is not open to the public, these problems become more easily handled. Our most common response is that those parties thought the Ranch was public property and that they had the right to land and camp there. I believe you understand what would happen should the airstrip be given public status. In addition, I suspect that public status for the landing strip would place certain problems of liability on the University.

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It is true that a hunting concession is presently operating out of the Taylor Ranch and has done so for many years, dating back to before the University obtained the property. We view this operation as being incompatible with the primary mission of the Ranch and are presently negotiating with the owners of the concession to phase it out.

Again, we strongly request that you support keeping the present "private status" designation for the Taylor Ranch airstrip. If I can provide you with additional information, please don't hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Ernest D. Ables
Director
Wilderness Research Center

BDA/crh
Encl.