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April 8, 1986

To: Mike Falter, Acting Associate Dean/Research  
From: John C. Hendee, Dean  
Subject: Taylor Ranch Wilderness Research Potential

The Taylor Ranch in the middle of the River of No Return Wilderness is the key facility for the College's Wilderness Research Center and gives FWR the potential to have world renowned programs of wilderness research. The keys are the large surrounding area of predominantly natural ecosystems protected by wilderness status and consequently the natural, ambient conditions in the water, climate and atmospheric conditions. Obviously the area has tremendous potential for research dependent on natural (wilderness) conditions. The Taylor Ranch and the FWR Wilderness Research Center can be the staging area and institutional sponsor-focus-facilitator-manager of such research. We have the ambition to achieve this potential. We also need vision, money and cooperation by organizations that are involved in wilderness-related research.

A potential constraint and opportunity in pursuing expanded vision and cooperation for the Wilderness Research Center is establishing the Taylor Ranch as a wilderness research staging area and facility. As "inholders" in federally classified Wilderness, and as the only (or one of a very few) College with a declared areas of emphasis in wilderness, we want to be at once exemplary in respecting the Wilderness Act and in taking advantage of the wilderness research opportunities. We currently have been offered by the Forest Service a value in-kind trade for the Taylor Ranch development rights--a conservation easement. The attached letter summarizes the status of our negotiations on this matter with the Forest Service. I hope that by January 1987 we can be talking very specifically about an exchange of the Taylor Ranch development rights for value that can be invested back into the Wilderness Research Center. A key will be to insure that in exchanging the development rights we don't trade away the potential for research instrumentation that may be essential for the climatological-atmospheric-water quality monitoring and the staging-preparation and initial analysis of field samples for ecosystem studies in the surrounding wilderness. The physical facilities would seem to be adequate in terms of housing; the proposed easement allows development of a low head hydro or solar power



system to run lights and computers in the laboratory which is now being refurbished. But what other facilities are necessary to support the kind of world-renowned Wilderness Research Center to which we aspire? We need a clear view of the research opportunities that vision might involve and the minimum necessary facilities for its support (minimum necessary because of the wilderness setting)? Perhaps we need microwave communication, a satellite dish? What climatological and water monitoring facilities? What else? The bottom line is that we don't want to foreclose options for research essential to achieving the potential of Taylor Ranch as the key facility for our Wilderness Research Center.

I think we need a site visit and assessment of these issues by prominent scientists in pertinent organizations such as the Forest Service, EPA, National Science Foundation, National Academy of Sciences, Idaho National Engineering Lab, etc. I think you would be an excellent person to lead such an assessment for UI-FWR. We would want the Blue Ribbon Committee to be briefed by the Wilderness Research Center Policy Committee, UI President's Office, and the Forest Service. Would you develop--in cooperation with me:

1. A prospectus for "Assessment of Facility Needs at the Taylor Ranch for Wilderness Research." The prospectus should include a short history of the site, wilderness conditions in the surrounding area, short description of previous research at the site, problems suitable for study, questions for the Assessment Team.
2. List of pertinent organizations and people with interest or a stake in potential research at Taylor Ranch.
3. List of prominent scientists and organizations who are candidates to serve on the Assessment Team.
4. Proposed logistics, timeline and budget for completing the assessment.

Mike, I look forward to working closely with you on this project--starting with review of a prospectus outline. It's an important task we need to complete by early fall.

JCH/pkv

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