

*(Sent to Monument Manager Matthew Bokach via email on November 7, who will be out of the country until November 12)..*

Dear Mr. Bokach:

We are seeking to address the designation of the Charlton-Chilao Recreation Complex as a no hunting, no firearms zone.

The short ask is, we would like for there to be internal employee and volunteer education, public information outreach, and on-site signage with the boundaries of the no hunting zone displayed in all kiosks in the recreation complex.

The no hunting/no firearms designation was made at some point prior to 1984 by the County of Los Angeles, and there are maps which illustrate the boundaries, but this designation is not widely known, and the maps are not readily available. In fact, many USFS volunteers and employees are unaware that a no hunting zone exists. The only map we have seen which shows the boundaries as an overlay was published by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Avenza, the map service the USFS website links out to, does not show the no hunting zone overlay on their maps or in their apps.

We're hoping to bridge this information gap from the inside out. We're seeking a way to make sure that all USFS employees, volunteers and partner agencies know that hunting is not legal within the recreation complex, and know what those boundaries are, while simultaneously seeking to inform the public with signage and through the USFS PIO and social media.

There's a human safety need for addressing this situation.

On October 12 of this year, the opening day of hunting season, a hunter with a bear tag was camping in Manzanita campground. He shot a bear in the campground because it "startled him." Then he went to the fire station to get help retrieving it from where it had fallen. We drove by following the CAFW/USFS necropsy. I took a few pictures. I recalled that there wasn't supposed to be hunting in the whole of the recreation area, but there are always hunters prowling around the campgrounds and picnic area during hunting season, and there's no signage anywhere to indicate that this is a no hunting zone.

The following day, two hunters were perched in the rocks above Meadow Campground. Personnel from the fire station told me that if they were more than

200 feet from the road, it was legal. That's not remotely accurate information, but it's official if it comes from a USFS employee, so I respected it.

I shared pictures of the hunters on social media, simply alerting other recreation users to be aware. That post garnered well over 100 comments, through which I learned that almost no one had any real knowledge of hunting regulations, or the elusive and perhaps mythical no hunting zone in Chilao.

The Chilao Visitors Center does have a single map, dated 1984, which they let me photograph, as well as handouts for hunters, and they are aware of the boundaries of the no hunting zone. I am very grateful for their help in getting better imagery of those boundaries.

After a few weeks of sharing images of the boundaries and having some fruitful conversations, I was feeling like maybe that's all it would take...a little friendly public outreach. It seemed to me like there were already less hunters in the campground.

And then, on November 4 as I was driving past Manzanita, a bullet whistled past my car. It was close enough that I heard a double echo as it passed a tree. How close is that? I don't know. I've never had that experience before. It was pretty amazing and a little scary. I didn't hear the bullet strike or sink into anything though. So that bullet could potentially have gone right across the campground road behind me. And that is really not safe.

The no hunting zone may actually benefit hunters and the environment in the long run. There is still viable deer habitat in Chilao (more controlled burning of deer grass would be good) and the region could provide a safe haven for deer populations to stabilize. The population has been on a steady decline for roughly sixty years, and a much more dramatic decline locally in the past eight years.

For people recreating in Chilao, seeing deer is a wonderful treat.

Finally, a healthy deer population sustains all the predator and scavenger species, and reduces the likelihood of unwanted wildlife encounters driven by hunger.

In closing, we hope we can begin bridging the information gap with inter-agency education, signage throughout the recreation complex, and a public awareness campaign. It is our belief that most hunters will abide by the regulations if they have a clear understanding of what those regulations are. For those who would

choose not to abide, let us leave them little opportunity to say they were not informed.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Corina Roberts