

Dear Members of the Land Rights Council and Members of the Plaintiffs' Class,

As many of you know, my name is William Harrison and I recently purchased the Cielo Vista Ranch (previously known as the "Taylor Ranch") in Costilla County in August of 2017. During the due diligence process I learned about the nearly 5,000 people with historic easement rights to access the ranch to gather firewood and timber, as well as graze cattle, for their personal use.

I've learned a bit about the long history of this ranch, and the hostile relationship for the past 50 years between the ranch owners and the easement holders living in the San Luis Valley.

I've met with the Lands Rights Council. I've had breakfast, lunch, and dinner in restaurants within San Luis. Everyone I've met in person seems very nice. Understandably, given the history of how Jack Taylor interacted with the community, there is a lot of tension around anything involving the Cielo Vista Ranch. And those tensions seem to automatically be transferred to whomever the current owner of the ranch is. In fact, I just learned that lesson first hand when I saw the community's incredibly emotional reaction to my December letter that offered to purchase easement rights from anyone who no longer wanted them. Let me begin by saying that I am sorry if my letter offended you. The purpose was not to diminish or threaten or negatively impact anyone's rights, but rather to gauge the interest of individuals who may not use or ever want to use the rights and who therefore might want to sell them.

I expected some recipients of the letter to accept my offer and some to decline it. I sincerely viewed this as a "win-win" proposition for those who want to sell (receive cash for a right they did not use) and for those who did not want to sell (fewer people using the shared resources of the ranch). I still cannot comprehend how this offer to purchase real estate rights was met with such a venomous reaction. I was surprised to see one local newspaper article entitled "New Owner, Same Old Tricks", only to be outdone by the article's comments section that included life-threatening threats.

There are a lot of good people who use their easement rights as permitted by the court. And I fully respect those rights. But as I've learned from my meeting with the Land Right's Council and from my own experience, there is a small group of people who abuse their rights by doing far more than is legally permissible at the ranch - the easement rights do not include the right to hunt, fish, picnic, or otherwise use the ranch for recreational purposes. I understand their perspective - they think they should have much broader rights - so, I understand their disappointment. But the law is clear that these other uses are not permitted.

For a bit of context, consider that over the past 150 years, the number of easement holders has grown from ~170 to ~5,000. At that rate, 50 years from now we could have ~15,000 easement holders. I'm 31 years old, and I plan to own this ranch for a very long time. As a prudent landowner, I want to reduce the odds that the ranch has ~15,000 easement holders 50 years from now. We should all want to reduce the odds that we have what economists call "a tragedy of the commons", which occurs when everyone has the right to use a limited resource, then everyone is selfishly incentivized to use as much of it as they possibly can, because if they don't, someone else will. Whether it's over-grazing, or over-logging, the asset

may be over utilized until it is seriously damaged or destroyed. Certainly, everyone who considers this land to be sacred would share this concern. Don't we all have an obligation to be stewards of this remarkable property?

Those of you whose families moved here 150 years ago, know that it was your ancestors' enterprising impulses that motivated them to settle this land, which was cheap and plentiful. I truly did not expect anyone to be offended by my making an offer to purchase the easement rights. It is simply an offer. And everyone clearly has the right to say no. The question is simple, what brings more value to your life, \$300, or limited access rights that the majority of easement holders never use and may not ever intend to use? For those who use the property, I would suspect they value their access rights more than the money, and would elect to decline the offer. While those who do not use their easement rights, may be more likely to put greater value on the \$300. I understand and respect that. I ask that you understand and respect my efforts to reduce the odds of future over use of the property (be that use legal, or illegal). None of this negatively impacts those of you who want to retain your rights – in fact, to the contrary, I sincerely believe that it is to your benefit – and at my cost.

I would like to improve the ranch. I would like to have controlled burns to improve the forest health. I would like to clean up the areas which were damaged by logging over the past decades. I think a proper land management program would benefit everyone with rights to the ranch. But if I do it, if I spend money to improve the health of the ecosystem, and the health of native grasses improve, we need to make sure we don't have abuses and over use such as multiple individuals putting up to 100 head of cattle on the ranch, or people taking timber or firewood for commercial purposes or people who don't have rights coming on the Ranch for other purposes. With respect to grazing, allowing overuse would result in a few people running a for profit cattle operation on grasses that I paid to have restored and that all other property owners with rights have the right to legitimately use. This is an example of a tragedy of the commons that I described above. The result of which will likely be that no one is incentivized to take care of the natural habitat and improve it, because if one person invests in improving it, the next person will be incentivized to harvest those resources because if they don't do it, one of the other ~5,000 people will do so. We have a race to the bottom that everyone loses.

As I mentioned above, when I did my due diligence before acquiring the ranch, I was fully aware of the easement rights and the courts' interpretation of the extent of these rights. What I was not aware of was the actual use being made; the percentage of the ~5,000 property owners who were actually using or interested in using the right; nor the degree of abuse of those rights. In the short time since I purchased the ranch, I've learned that poaching is a rampant problem on the ranch. There are multiple cases in which people have been caught harvesting wood to sell to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties. There are groups who go on the ranch to have picnics, and fish. There are individuals who run 20 to 100 head of cattle on the property (which would seem to pretty clearly exceed the legal limit of use for domestic purposes). There are people who are taking payments from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to graze their cattle on Cielo Vista. Recently, vandals destroyed one of the big solid steel gates on the north end of the ranch by cutting it in half with a torch and grinder of some sort. Multiple neighbors have cut the fence of the ranch to install gates from their property, directly onto the ranch. This is not legal. Another neighbor recently cut the fence to come into the ranch with an excavator to take dirt and move that dirt onto their property. This is not legal either. These

abuses of land use rights are bad enough – but even worse are the genuine threats to my employees. One of my ranch hands saw people having a picnic on the ranch, and as he started driving toward them, they started to shoot towards him. In a separate incident, a ranch hand was blocked in by easement holders in their vehicles – one in front and one behind him – who threatened him with bodily harm if he did not “mind his own business”. None of this can continue and I want to work with the community to find a way to eliminate it and work together on the common goal of preserving the Ranch and its resources

As relayed to me in my meeting with the representatives of the Land Rights Council and as I have now personally witnessed, there are some people who simply don't want enforcement; they don't want to live by what the courts have ordered. They want to abuse their rights, or exercise rights that they don't have or otherwise break the law. They do not appreciate the sanctity of this land nor do they respect the rule of law. What they are doing is illegal. And those individuals will be at odds with the rest of us for a very long time. Certainly, you must agree with that proposition.

I want to be very clear – illegal uses of the ranch and physical threats will not be tolerated. And I want to work with the Land Rights Council and others in the community with an interest in the Ranch to do whatever is necessary to monitor the use of the property to put an end to non-compliance.

If we all live by the letter and spirit of what the courts have deemed permissible uses by easement holders, then this can, and should, work for everyone. But, clearly, we need governance and rules, and there must be enforcement of the rules. As the owner of this property, I will fully respect the rights of the law-abiding easement holders with whom I have no quarrel and I will work with such easement-holders in my efforts to protect the Ranch and its resources from those who violate the law

The most important thing I observed at my one meeting with the Land Rights Council was their love and respect for this sacred property, and their very clear expectations that everyone not only respect the property, but also lawfully comply with its use and enjoyment. You should know, that belief is something we all share in common. To that end, I ask that you consider having your lawyers contact my lawyer to discuss the possibility of our scheduling settlement discussions, with the hope that we can work together to develop a mutually agreeable plan for management and governance of the uses of the Ranch, as well as an approach for obtaining a release of the easement rights for those property owners who desire to do so after consultation with counsel. I am even open to putting the pending appeal on hold while we try to work together to resolve these issues, if you think doing so would be helpful.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

William Harrison