



County Administrator's Office

Craig L. Pedro
County Administrator

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April 7, 2014

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Craig L. Pedro, County Administrator
Tracie Riggs, Deputy County Administrator

SUBJECT: 2014 Strawberry Music Festival at Camp Mather

The Strawberry Music Festival has been taking place in Tuolumne County for over 30 years and draws 5,000 to 7,000 participants each year. This has a significant impact on the local economy. Due to the Rim Fire, the 2013 festival was canceled. Participants and local business' look forward to the festival resuming this year.

On Friday April 4th staff from the Strawberry Music Festival contacted Supervisor Gray to relay their concern that they had been verbally notified that the City and County of San Francisco was not going to issue a permit for the 2014 Strawberry Music Festival. County staff began working on the issue Monday morning by placing calls to the staff of Strawberry Music Festival, San Francisco Recreation and Parks Dept., and the U.S. Forest Service. As of the writing of this letter, we have been able to make contact with Stephanie Saracini and Charlie Cran, both from the Strawberry Music Festival, Dennis Kern, Chief Operations Officer for San Francisco Recreation and Parks, and Susan Skalski, Forest Supervisor for Stanislaus National Forest.

Mr. Cran (President of the festival) has been facilitating the festival for over 30 years and is very excited for the 2014 year as it is Camp Mather's 90th anniversary. The reasons given to Mr. Cran for the non-issuance of a permit this year are primarily safety related to Evergreen Road and the fact that most of the forest is still closed to the public.

As your Board is aware, Evergreen Road just underwent a major overhaul in the Ackerson Creek culvert replacement and this is the same area in which County staff worked with Cal FIRE and baseline crews to remove hazard trees and clean debris. Evergreen Road is open to the public and has been utilized by both public, private, and governmental agencies since it reopened after the fire. There are however, many areas still closed to the public due to hazard trees. The Forest

...serving the Board of Supervisors, departments, and the community as good stewards of the County's fiscal and human resources through collaborative, professional and ethical leadership.

Service is hopeful that their hazard tree removal project will begin in early summer. Dispersed camping in undesignated areas is always a concern but all the more until hazard trees can be removed from such areas. This does necessitate the need to ensure there is no dispersed camping in areas near the camp. An accommodation the festival staff is willing and happy to put in place.

In a letter from Susan Skalski to the San Francisco Parks and Recreation Dept., she relayed her concerns regarding the planned Strawberry Music Festival (Attachment A). During a conversation with Ms. Skalski, we found that her primary concern is dispersed camping in areas closed to the public for safety reasons. In response to the forest closure, Charlie Cran took the time to explain that there have been two other occasions in which Strawberry Music Festival has successfully and safely taken place in the past when other areas of the forest have been closed off to the public.

Dennis Kern, of San Francisco Recreation and Parks Dept., voiced concern that the Cottonwood Creek spring has the capability to serve 500 campers a week, but does not have sufficient capacity to serve 7,000 participant over a three day period. When discussed with Mr. Cran, he indicated he is more than willing to bring in water if needed. In fact, he relayed a time in the past when a water main broke in the camp and they were able to provide sufficient water to the campers with the water truck they keep on hand.

Given the above, it appears that there are actions that can be taken to ensure the safety of participants as well as address issues related to the drought. If these actions are taken, the 2014 Strawberry Music Festival could be held.

Supervisor Gray has suggested a letter requesting the City and County of San Francisco proceed holding the 2014 Strawberry Music Festival while supporting the need for necessary steps to ensure the safety of all who might attend. Staff has prepared such a draft letter for your Board's consideration (Attachment B).

Recommendation

Consideration of sending correspondence to the City and County of San Francisco requesting that they hold the 2014 Strawberry Music Festival at Camp Mather.

CC: Charlie Cran, President Strawberry Music Festival
Susan Skalski, Supervisor Stanislaus National Forest

Attachments



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Stanislaus National Forest

19777 Greenley Road
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 532-3671
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<http://www.fs.usda.gov/stanislaus>

File Code: 1500

Date: March 5, 2014

Phil Ginsberg
San Francisco Parks and Recreation
501 Stanyan Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Mr. Ginsberg:

As you know, the Rim Fire created and continues to present numerous hazards to the safety of Forest visitors. A Forest Closure Order pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50 (a) and (b) closing the rim fire area will remain in place at least until November 2014. I am writing this letter to express significant concerns regarding the planned Labor Day Strawberry Music Festival at Camp Mather. Following are my concerns:

- The presence of hazard trees along roads and trails, recreation sites and private land and the cutting and felling of hazard trees.
- Logging activities with large machinery operating adjacent to roads, and frequent log truck haul traffic.
- People attending the music festival and dispersed camping and hiking on the forest within the closure area.
- People attending the music festival driving through the forest sight-seeing within the closure area.
- Difficulty of signing the forest closure around Evergreen Lodge and Camp Mather, both from the Forest's perspective as well as your own.

Because of the potential for numerous opportunities for people being at risk from the numerous hazards created by the Rim Fire as well as the mechanical harvest and transport of logs I am highly concerned Forest visitors could be injured. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the above number.

Sincerely,

SUSAN SKALSKI
Forest Supervisor

cc: Vern Shumway



April 7, 2014

Phil Ginsburg, Director
San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department
501 Stanyan Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

RE: 2014 Strawberry Music Festival

Dear Mr. Ginsburg,

The Strawberry Music Festival has taken place at Camp Mather for over 30 years and has provided an amazing opportunity for families to enjoy the spectacular landscape and all the camp has to offer. Each year the festival draws thousands of people into the County and many business' have come to depend upon the increase in visitation during this particular weekend. This year is a special year for the festival, as they will celebrate the 90th anniversary of Camp Mather. On April 4, staff from the Strawberry Music Festival contacted John Gray, 5th District Supervisor, to relay their concern that they had received a verbal decision from the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department to not issue a permit for the 2014 Strawberry Music Festival to take place at Camp Mather. It is our understanding that the reason for not issuing the permit was primarily related to safety due to the Rim Fire and current drought conditions (which were compounded by the fire).

The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors shares in your concern regarding the safety of those visiting Camp Mather and is keenly aware of the impacts of the drought. Our Board respectfully requests your reconsideration of issuing a permit that would include necessary measures to ensure safety of all who participate. As you know, Susan Skalski (Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest) wrote you a letter voicing her concerns related to safety of those participating in the festival. Conversations with Ms. Skalski indicated that her primary concerns were related to dispersed camping as many of the areas within the forest remain closed from the fire. Prohibition of dispersed camping is an example of item that could be included in the issuance of a permit for the 2014 year.

The drought has impacted many individuals and business' across the State of California and our Board understands that measures would need to be taken to provide potable water for the participants. The Chief of Operations, Dennis Kern, discussed that the camp currently has the capability to serve 500 campers and 80 staff and that 7,000 individuals during a three day period is simply too much for the infrastructure to handle. Charlie Cran, President of the

Strawberry Music Festival, Inc., has indicated his willingness to bring in water, if needed. He has also indicated that he is prepared to put in place safeguards to minimize dispersed camping and ensure participants stay on Camp Mather property. Staff from the festival work closely with our County roads department to close off roads and areas not open to the public and they are ready to begin the process as soon as possible.

Taking all of the above into consideration we feel accommodations can be made to make this festival possible and keep participants safe. Our Board collectively encourages the issuance of a permit for the 2014 Strawberry Music Festival. Majority of the business' located in the Groveland area have been hit especially hard as a result of the Rim Fire, the government shut down and now the drought. The Strawberry Music Festival is essential to the economy of our County.

We look forward to working with you in the near future to ensure the long term viability of the Strawberry Music Festival. Please do not hesitate to contact our County Administrator's Office with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Evan Royce, Chair